Chronicles of A Kentucky Settlement

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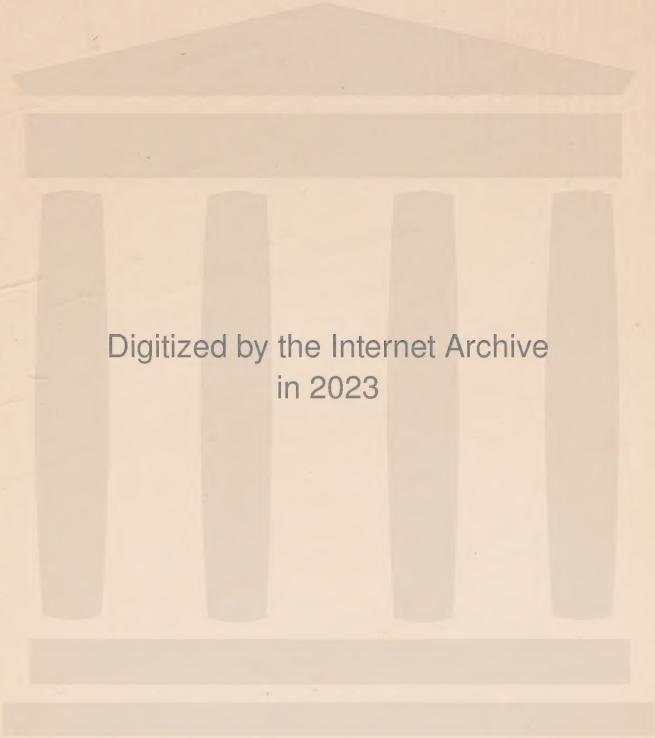
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CHRONICLES

OF A

KENTUCKY SETTLEMENT

BY

WILLIAM COURTNEY WATTS

These, these have left
Their spell upon me, and their memories
Have passed into my spirit, and are now
Blent with my being till they seem a part
Of my own immortality.

GEORGE D. PRENTICE.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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TO

MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

THIS VOLUME IS

LOVINGLY INSCRIBED

PREFACE.

AFTER having been actively engaged for twenty-five years in commercial pursuits, in America and Europe, the time came when a long and severe illness left me such a cripple that I have since been unable to engage in any active employment. Then (in 1883) to while away hours that would otherwise have been tedious, I began writing some incidents in the life of one of the early settlers of Livingston County, intending to present the sketches to one of my children. As I progressed, I became so much interested in my work that, knowing as I did many of the pioneer settlers of the county, I went far beyond my original design, and hence this book. Its title, "Chronicles of a Kentucky Settlement," was suggested to me by an old friend, a fine scholar and a competent critic, as best fitting the character of the work. The book, however, is not, as some may infer from its title, a Local History. I endeavored to make it of interest to general readers.

The first entry of lands in the Virginia Military District when opened at Louisville, Kentucky, in 1784, was in Livingston County, at the junction of the Ohio and Cumberland Rivers. The county was organized in 1798, and Salem, its county seat,—in which town I

was born,—was for the first quarter of this century one of the most important towns in Western Kentucky; and Smithland, the present county seat, was one of the most important commercial points on the rivers between Louisville and New Orleans. Hence Livingston County has been the field of as many stirring adventures and romantic incidents as perhaps any county in the West. Some of the most interesting and romantic of these I sought to portray in these "Chronicles"; they are tragic, pathetic, and humorous by turns, and illustrate not only the hardships but also the romance there was in the lives of our pioneer fathers.

To make my work the more interesting, I wove it into the form of a continuous story. The incidents, however, are not arranged strictly in chronological order, but as suited the exigencies of the tales I had to tell. There is nothing designedly sensational about the stories told,—nothing of the "blood and thunder" order; and believing as I do that there is much more of the Divine than there is of the devilish in humanity, however fallen it may be, I have dwelt upon the good rather than the evil there was in some of the characters portrayed. Hence, while I have dealt with real personages, yet, for good and pertinent reasons, which will be apparent to every considerate reader, the various characters introduced are under fictitious names, but their originals will in many cases be readily recognized by our older citizens.

It has seemed to me that, as the generation who personally knew some of the pioneers of our State will soon have passed away, some such materials as I have woven into these "Chronicles" should be collected and preserved in all the older counties of our State;

for Kentucky was pre-eminently the Pioneer State, being not only the earliest settled west of the Alleghany Mountains, but the "friend in need" of all the surrounding Territories, since formed into great States.

W. C. W.

SMITHLAND, KENTUCKY,
February 7, 1897.

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CHRONICLES OF A KENTUCKY SETTLEMENT.

CHAPTER I.

The Adair Family—Tom Adair as a Soldier—His Marriage—His Three Sons—The Death of his Wife—He Goes to Kentucky—The Three Old Quaker Brothers—Joseph Adair Apprenticed to Mr. Morris—Joseph Goes West with Mr. Morris.

JOHN ADAIR, a handsome, dark-haired young Englishman, who had from boyhood been in the naval service of his country, was wounded in the great naval engagement between the English and French off Cape Finisterre, October 17, 1747. In the autumn of the following year, his health being still impaired by the long confinement resulting from his wound, he was advised to spend the approaching winter in a warmer and less humid climate than that of England. Temporary peace had then been given to Europe by the celebrated treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, between Great Britain, France, Holland, Germany, Spain, and Genoa; and, seeing a period of comparative inactivity in prospect, young Adair determined to follow the advice given

him. He chose to visit the province of Languedoc, in the southern part of France, not only on account of its salubrious climate but from its great historical interest.

During his sojourn in the city of Toulouse, in Languedoc, John Adair had the good fortune to rescue from imminent death a young and beautiful lady, Mdlle. Beauneau, who belonged to an old and highly esteemed Huguenot family. What the danger was, and how the gallant feat of rescuing the lady was performed, we know not, but, according to a family tradition, John Adair's success was purchased at the expense of such serious injuries to himself that for a time his life was despaired of. Mdlle. Beauneau was unremitting in her attentions to her preserver during his confinement; and her gratitude and admiration soon ripened into love, which was so ardently reciprocated that, soon after his recovery, they were married.

After travelling for a few months in Italy and Switzerland, John Adair returned to England with his bride; but they remained there only a few months, and then set sail for Charleston, South Carolina, intending to make it their future home.

In the course of time three sons were born to them—Josiah, Anthony, and Thomas.

John Adair and his wife died prior to the Declaration of Independence by the Colonies in 1776. Josiah, the eldest son, succeeded to his father's business as a merchant in Charleston; but on the breaking out of the Revolutionary war he moved, taking with him his stock of goods, to Hillsboro, North Carolina, where he married a Miss Susanna Harcourt. He died a few years later, leaving no issue. Anthony, the second son, seems to have inherited his father's fondness for

the sea, and, during the war, sailed as an officer on a privateer ; but neither he nor the vessel on which he sailed was afterwards heard from. Thomas Adair, the remaining son, served his country faithfully throughout the Revolutionary war. He was in Charleston during the siege, in 1780 ; but after the surrender of the city, made his escape. Thenceforward, until the close of the war, he was under the command of the famous cavalry officer, General Francis Marion.

Thomas Adair—or "Dashing Tom," as he was generally called by his comrades in arms—was a rollicking, frolicsome sort of genius, who had, however, a serious side to his nature. It is said he would sometimes get "half-seas-over," and when in that condition was always in a jolly good humor ; but when his sober senses had returned, he would repent, straighten himself up, swear off—with a diminutive mental reservation,—and for some time thereafter be the grave and dignified Sergeant Adair. He could, however, never impressively act the part of a "potent, grave, and reverend seignior," owing to an habitual twinkle about the corners of his black eyes. These idiosyncrasies, however, by no means militated against his popularity with his comrades. Those ragged soldiers (Marion's men were known as the ragged squad) did not believe in "penance, fasts, and abstinence." Besides, when the word of command was given, there was no man quicker to the front, none with a stouter heart or more nervous arm, than Tom Adair. But when the battle was over, the wounded cared for, and the dead buried, Dashing Tom was often seen to go aside,—seek some quiet spot, and wipe away his tears.

That seven years of soldiering should have unfitted

Tom Adair, somewhat, for the sober duties of a peaceful life is not surprising. Certain it is, that when—the war being over—he visited Hillsboro, where his brother Josiah had died, he was by no means a shining light; but he had one grand, redeeming trait in a woman's eye,—he could love hard and faithfully. The great attraction in Hillsboro to Tom was a certain fair maiden named Mary Harcourt, a sister of the widow of Josiah Adair.

William Harcourt, the father of the fair Mary, was one of three brothers, two of whom, James and Joseph, were blind and unmarried. William, who was himself blind in one eye, had but two children,—the daughters referred to. Mary, the youngest and fairest, was the darling and pet of the three old men, who not only lived under the same roof, but were copartners in business. The three brothers were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers; had emigrated from England many years before the war; and, engaging in business as importing merchants, had, when the war broke out, accumulated a large fortune for that day and country.

During the war, North Carolina, and we believe other of the Colonies, passed an ordinance requiring citizens owing money to subjects of Great Britain to pay the amount into the treasury of the State, which thereby assumed the position of debtor to the foreign creditor. Harcourt Brothers owed at the time a large amount for goods imported, which amount they, as soon as possible, paid to the State Treasurer. After the termination of the war, and the signing of the treaty of peace, the English creditors, unable to recover the amount due them from the State, which was hopelessly bankrupted by the long and severe struggle for

independence, came upon the original debtors, as they were allowed to do by the terms of the treaty of peace, and the Harcourts, who were honorable merchants, paid again in full, although in so doing they were, in their old age, left comparatively poor.

When Tom Adair first met and won the heart of the beautiful Mary Harcourt, she was looked upon as a great heiress, and he was accused of fortune-hunting by some. But the charge was unfounded, for the gentle Quakeress was, at the time of his visit to Hillsboro, no longer rich, and Tom had come to ask her hand in marriage.

What sort of a plea Tom Adair made, when he asked Friend Harcourt for the hand of his daughter, is unknown, but tradition gives us the old man's answer.

"Friend Thomas," he said, in a slow and impressive manner, "I knew thy father, and he was an honest, worthy man. Thy eldest brother, Josiah, when the husband of my daughter Susanna, I loved as a son. Thee, also, I have known from thy boyhood, and I have long suspected thy affection for my Mary. I know, too, that thou hast long been a favorite of hers; but I am not prepared to give thee an answer. Before doing so, I must not only talk the matter over with my Mary herself, but with my brothers James and Joseph. This much, however, I may add: Thy comrades in the war reported thee a brave yet merciful soldier. But thou knowest that I and my brethren are men of peace; and, I frankly tell thee, I had hoped my Mary would find a husband in our own Society. Then, too, since the close of the war, thou hast been very unsettled; and whilst I doubt not thy purpose to amend and go steadily to thy work, yet I fear thou wilt soon tire of a

peaceful and quiet life. It, however, speaks well for thee, my son, that thou shouldst have placed thy affections upon such a damsel as my Mary, for she is industrious, frugal, and cheerful ; and since the loss of my Frances, her mother, she hath so well performed her part in our household, that, should we give her up to thee, it would be a grievous loss, not only to me, but much more so to my blind brothers, who would miss not only her willing hands and the music of her voice, but her bright eyes, which often serve as eyes for them. But go now, my son, I will speak with thee again to-morrow at this hour."

At the interview the following day, Tom Adair and Mary Harcourt were made as happy as mortals can be by obtaining the full consent of the three old men. A few weeks later they were married.

For seven years Tom Adair and his quiet, cheerful wife lived happily together in Hillsboro, and three children were born to them—three sons, William, Thomas, and Joseph. But alas ! three days after the birth of the last, the gentle mother died. For two years more Tom Adair went about his work as usual, but many thought he was going into a decline and would soon follow his lamented wife. Then, in search of health, he quitted Hillsboro, and journeyed over the mountains to the West,—to the new State of Kentucky, leaving his three sons with their grandfather and his blind brothers.

James and Joseph Harcourt had lost their sight in early manhood,—how is not known,—but they had, before their great affliction, received a good education in England. Being of a kindly, social disposition, and possessing well stored minds and fine conversational

powers, their society was sought by many, both old and young, and they rarely lacked for friends to read to and converse with them. But for their blindness they were eminently qualified to instruct the three little boys left mainly in their care. Such, however, was the old men's attachment to the three little fellows, and such the care bestowed on their education, that their progress was very rapid. Unfortunately, before the youngest boy, Joseph, had attained the age of seven, and when he had only learned to read and write a little, the last of his kind old protectors passed away. Following each other in quick succession, the three old Quaker brothers were summoned to their reward : their blind eyes were unsealed in the better world.

After the death of the last of the Harcourt brothers, a Mr. Jonathan Whitley, who had married Susanna, the widow of Josiah Adair, took charge of the three sons of Thomas Adair, and sent them to school for a short time ; but, after the custom of the day, soon apprenticed them to learn trades. In this, Mr. Whitley was no doubt acting under instructions from the boys' father, who had married again, but was very poor and unable to help his children, from whom he was so far separated.

We purpose following particularly the fortunes of but one of the sons of Thomas and Mary Harcourt Adair, namely, Joseph, the youngest of the three. He, Joseph, when about nine or ten years of age, went to live with a distant relative named John Morris, a farmer and saddler, who lived near Hillsboro, and to whom Joseph was bound as an apprentice.

Mr. Morris was, at the time Joseph became a member of his household, about thirty years of age, and

had a wife, Jane, and two children,—John, aged four years, and Mary, an infant. Neither Mr. Morris nor his wife was unkind to the lonely lad, Joseph, who was well clothed and fed ; but their motto seemed to be—"Work, work, work ! morning, noon, and night !" and to this they adhered so rigidly that Joseph's life soon became a very laborious one. But, though a delicate lad, he was sinewy and possessed of such indomitable pluck that he stood his heavy tasks much better than might have been expected. Work soon became with him second nature, and he was never afterwards heard to complain of the hardships of his boyhood.

In the early autumn of the year 1805, Joseph being then eleven years old, Mr. Morris determined to remove with his family to the West,—to Tennessee or Kentucky. He had fixed upon no point, but, as he expressed it, "would keep moving until he came across a spot that suited him." For some years previous, there had been quite a tide of emigration from the Southern Atlantic States to the new and fertile States of Kentucky and Tennessee ; and although west of the Alleghany Mountains was then an almost unbroken wilderness, occasionally infested by hostile tribes of Indians, the roads little more than tracks through the forests, and few, if any, bridges built across the streams, still, the dangers and hardships of the long journey did not deter the experienced woodmen and bold hunters of that generation.

It was a warm bright morning in September when Mr. Morris and his family bade good-by to the relatives and friends who had called to see them off. There was little or no emotion displayed, few, if any, tears were shed by those leaving or those left behind,

but many a hearty "Good-by" and "God speed you" were spoken.

The parting between the lad, Joseph Adair, and his brothers was a sad one, for their mutual attachment was very strong. Nevertheless, they bore up like little men, and, cheered by the natural hopefulness of youth, looked forward to meeting again in the years to come. And Joseph had said that in his journeyings he hoped to come across his father.

The train containing Mr. Morris's personal property and effects consisted of two light wagons, each drawn by a pair of strong horses, and a larger wagon drawn by two yokes of oxen. Each wagon was surmounted by arched strips of tough, elastic timber, over which was stretched a covering of thick, white waterproof canvas.

The foremost and lightest wagon was driven by Mr. Morris, and in it rode his wife and children ; it further contained a mattress of straw, and such light articles as might be required at any moment. Chief among these, carefully but conveniently strapped behind the wagon, was Mr. Morris's long and heavy rifle, on which he mainly relied to provide his family with meat. The second wagon was driven by a negro boy named Ben, about eighteen years old ; while the ox wagon, in the rear, was driven by Stephen, a middle-aged negro man. In Stephen's wagon, Matilda—his wife, and the mother of the boy Ben—sometimes rode, but she usually preferred to walk. These three were the only slaves Mr. Morris owned. They cheerfully accompanied their "Mahs John" and "Missus Jane" to the wilds of the West, and regarded the journey somewhat in the light of a period of relaxation. Besides, these

slaves were attached to "Missus Jane, an' de chiluns of de fam'ly,"—an almost universal characteristic of their race.

With the three negroes, the lad Joseph Adair had become a great favorite, for he was kind and considerate both to "Uncle Stephen" and "Aunt Matilda"—for so he called them,—while Ben was his companion and friend.

A few hours after the "movers"—for so emigrants were invariably called—had left their old home, they reached the top of a high hill from which they could look back and obtain a view of Hillsboro and the surrounding country. A halt was made, and many a long, lingering look was cast back. After a few minutes of silence, there was a sign from the master, then the crack of a wagon whip was heard, the spell was broken, and the journey resumed.

For several weeks the journey continued without any incident worthy of note. The weather was favorable, and fair progress was made. The Blue Ridge Mountains had been passed. Their road had led them near the base of Mitchell's Peak, the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River. The grandeur of the mountain scenery filled the mind of the boy Joseph with wonder and amazement. He often wandered from the road to clamber some height, and on one occasion went above the cloud line, and stood in the sunlight while rain was falling below him. The incident made a very vivid impression on his mind.

A few days later the "movers" reached the waters of the French Broad River, then, as yet, one of the most picturesque streams in America. As it was then October, most of the leaves of the forest trees had turned

from emerald-green to purple, or red, or gold, or brown, interspersed with evergreen holly and verdant pine. The rounded hills looked like huge bouquets of flowers, and were enough to have awakened something like a poetic sentiment in the most callous hearts. The lad, Joseph Adair, oft lingered and surveyed the scenes around him, and acquired, during the journey across the mountains, a love for nature which he preserved to the close of his life.

CHAPTER II.

Joseph Adair and the Indian—The Howard Family—An Attack by Indians Feared—Preparations for Defence—The Signal Gun Fired.

A FEW days later, our "movers," still following the road along the banks of the French Broad River, passed through a defile in the Alleghany Mountains, and for the first time trod the soil of the new State of Tennessee.

Before crossing the State line, Joseph Adair, boy though he was, paused and cast a melancholy look towards the home of his childhood and the graves of his loved ones. Then, bidding good-by to the "good old North State," he turned and ran forward. Scarcely had he crossed the State line and overtaken the wagons, when he caught sight of a deer descending a hill to the left of the road, and, judging that it would cross the road a short distance in advance of the foremost wagon, he quickly called Mr. Morris's attention to the chance for a shot. After grasping his rifle, Mr. Morris had but a moment to wait before a ten-antlered stag bounded into the road some seventy yards ahead. In the twinkling of an eye, there was a loud, clear report from the trusty rifle, and the deer, after making a mighty bound, fell dead. This furnished the family

with a welcome addition to their supply of fresh meat, which at the moment was running rather low. Moreover, Stephen and Matilda—who, like most of their race, believed in signs and omens—considered the killing of the deer as an augury of success in the new State they had just entered.

That same day a much more exciting incident occurred. Late in the afternoon, Joseph, who had fallen some distance behind the teams—(he had been loitering along "plumping" marbles, a dozen or more of which he had brought with him from Hillsboro),—was much alarmed on seeing in the road, immediately in front of him, a large, fierce-looking Indian, gun in hand, and otherwise equipped with tomahawk, knife, etc., after the manner of his race. Joseph's first impulse—so he afterwards related—was to turn and run for his life; but this he knew, after a moment's consideration, would be unavailing, and would, moreover, be not only equivalent to a confession of cowardice, but, possibly, increase his danger. His next thought was to shout aloud for assistance, but then it struck him that he could not probably make himself heard, and, even if he could, the doubt thus expressed, as to the Indian's peaceable intentions, might anger him, in which event, his deadly work—if such he purposed—could be accomplished before Mr. Morris or any one else could come to his assistance. All of these thoughts ran quickly through the boy's mind; the Indian, meanwhile, standing like a statue in the road. It then occurred to Joseph that the Indian was closely observing the marbles, and, thereupon, he determined to resort to a little friendly diplomacy; and, picking up the marbles, and holding them out in the palm of his

hand, he approached the dusky stranger, and with as calm a voice as he could command—but, it must be confessed, with no little inward trepidation—said, "Marbles! Do you want one? May have both; I have more."

The Indian took the marbles and scrutinized one of them—Joseph's favorite white alley—so closely that the boy supposed the savage had never before seen such a toy, and was trying to determine its use; whereupon he drew two other marbles from his pocket, and casting one some six or eight feet from him, he then properly adjusted the other between his thumb and fingers, and, showing the position to the Indian, took deliberate aim and hit the marble he shot at so plump that it was knocked several yards, while the one shot spun around in almost the same spot from which the other had been knocked. It was a good shot. The Indian, observing the shot, uttered something like a grunt of approval and, placing the marbles given him in his pouch, without a word or gesture, stepped from the road and soon disappeared in the forest, which at that point was unusually dense with undergrowth.

A little later the negro boy, Ben, who had stopped his team near a small stream at the base of a long hill, for the purpose of watering his horses, saw Joseph coming down the hill at such a break-neck speed that he cried out, loud enough to be heard by every one of the company:

"My golly! lookee yonder! Dar mus' be a bar' or a pant'er arter Mister Josef, way he 's runnin'."

"Heigh ho! what 's the matter?" asked Mr. Morris, coming forward as the panting boy came to a halt. It was some moments before Joseph had sufficient

breath and composure to relate what had occurred; and when he had done so, there were several grave faces around him, for this was the first Indian seen upon the journey.

Mr. Morris was the first to speak, and, addressing Joseph, said: "As soon as you are rested, go ahead until you overtake Mr. Howard, and say to him that I wish him to halt his teams until I come up. And, that he may understand, and be on his guard, you must tell him of your having seen the Indian, that I think it probable there are others in this vicinity, and that I wish to talk with him about it."

Away sped the boy on receiving his message, and as Mr. Howard, with his wagons, was only some half a mile in advance, he soon overtook him, and delivered the message. Mr. Howard at once halted his wagons.

Several days before, Mr. Morris had overtaken Mr. Howard on the road; and learning that he was from South Carolina, and with his family—which consisted of his wife, six children, and four slaves—was on his way to Knoxville—at that time the capital of the State of Tennessee,—the two men had concluded to journey together for greater security; for nearly every part of East and Middle Tennessee was, at that early day, occasionally invaded by predatory bands of Creek and Cherokee Indians.

Mr. Howard was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, was somewhat noted as a mathematician, and had gained considerable reputation in his native State as a surveyor. He questioned Joseph particularly about the Indian he had seen, and, after listening with interest to the boy's prompt and intelligent replies, complimented him on his coolness in danger. Then

turning to one of his daughters—a very pretty, black-haired, blue-eyed girl of about Joseph's age, who had been standing by listening attentively to what had been said :

"Come, Harriet," he said, "you were having a snack a few minutes ago ; have you nothing left that you can offer our young friend here ?"

The daughter bounded away, like a young fawn, to one of the wagons and soon returned with a sweet potato and some cold slices of broiled venison, portions of the deer which Mr. Morris had that morning killed ; a hind-quarter of which had been sent to Mr. Howard.

Approaching Joseph and handing him the food, "I 'm sorry," the girl said rather timidly, "I have no bread to offer you, and that the sweet potato is cold."

"Thank you," Joseph replied, "this is very good. I 'm fond of a juicy sweet potato like this ; and, although it is cold, I 'm not likely"—he added with a smile—"to choke myself." And, without more ado, he began eating, for, after the excitement and violent exercise of the day, he was indeed hungry.

By this time Mr. Morris had come up with his wagons, and he and Mr. Howard at once walked aside to talk over their situation. Mr. Howard, who had had much experience on the frontier, and more knowledge of Indian customs and character, was the first speaker.

"I am satisfied," he said, "that the Indian Joseph saw was not so far from the villages of his nation and alone. I have, however, heard of no recent Indian depredations, and am inclined to think the one seen is merely one of a party on a hunting expedition, the

season being now favorable for preserving any game killed. We should, however, be on our guard, for, whilst there may be no danger to life, so highly do the Indians prize horses, that they may attempt to stampede and steal ours."

"You are perhaps right," said Mr. Morris, "and the question is, what should we do?"

"Let us try and find some open spot on a hill-top for our camp," answered Mr. Howard. "We can then arrange our wagons in such a position as to form an inclosure for our animals. We should then surround the inclosure with pine branches, so as to prevent any one, not close up to the inclosure, from seeing within, and obtaining a mark for a rifle."

"All right!" was the prompt response of Mr. Morris; who, after a short pause, added: "And we had better stand guard to-night. Don't you think so?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Howard, "for an Indian is a treacherous and cunning foe. Should it come to fighting, I am no marksman; I am very fond of trapping and fishing, but never hunted, and don't think I ever fired a gun a half-dozen times. If any shooting is necessary, I trust to my negro man Peter, who has an old musket, and has occasionally supplied us with game on our journey. I have had, too, so many proofs of Peter's fidelity and courage, that I am sure, should any Indians annoy us to-night, he will render us good service. He is, however, like most of his race, too sleepy-headed to stand guard."

"Stephen, my man, will fight too, if *cornered*," said Mr. Morris, emphazing the last word.

Little more was said, and an hour later a very advantageous spot was found for a camp. The wagons were

arranged as before indicated, and the animals secured as well as possible in the inclosure, in the centre of which a large fire was soon blazing ; and Matilda and Fanny, the negro cooks of the two families, were soon busily employed in preparing supper. In the meanwhile, Stephen and his son Ben, and Peter and his son Nelson—a boy of fourteen years,—were employed in cutting and interlacing, around and between the wagons, young bushy-topped pines, which soon formed a satisfactory screen. Mr. Howard and Mr. Morris, after giving instructions how the work should be done, made a careful inspection of the surroundings—inspecting every tree behind which an Indian might skulk. By the time supper was ready the two men had returned, and having inspected the screen, they expressed themselves as well satisfied with their camp and the precautions taken. Harriet Howard and Nora —a fair-haired, blue-eyed sister some two years younger —had gone with Joseph Adair to a spring near at hand, and they took up so much time chatting, and talking of the old homes and friends left behind them, that supper was ready before they returned with their pails of water. Everything was now in readiness for a much better meal than usual ; for, this being the first occasion of the two families eating together, each of the ladies had selected from her stores some delicacy,—one tea, and dried peaches for stewing ; the other, enough flour to make biscuits for the entire party, and some butter bought at a farm-house on the road. The meal was a hearty one, but, as it progressed, there was very little conversation, and that little carried on in an undertone ; for, while no serious alarm was expressed, nor indeed apprehended, yet

every one seemed to regard the position as too grave to admit of mirth or levity.

By the time the meal was over the twinkling stars were shining with unusual brilliancy through the clear, dry atmosphere. All around was profound quietude, excepting the roar, soft and subdued, of the French Broad River, not far distant, the rapid current of which was here obstructed by hundreds of huge boulders which had rolled down from the mountain's side.

Preparations were soon made to obtain such rest for the women and children as circumstances would admit of, aroused, as every one was, by the possible danger of their situation. Mr. Howard specially cautioned the entire party to keep as much as possible from the light of the fire, so as not to be seen by any stealthy Indian who might approach in the darkness, and to preserve the utmost silence, since the sound of a voice would indicate the speaker's position in the camp.

It was thought that should the Indians approach to make a survey, or an assault on the camp, they would most likely do so from the south, for on that side the forest was most dense and would afford them a better chance to approach unseen. Mr. Howard insisted on standing sentinel on that side, and said he would take with him his dog Rover, a large brownish-yellow cur ; a grave, sedate dog with the courage of a mastiff, and the scent of a bloodhound. This dog had been Mr. Howard's almost constant companion for several years, and so well was he trained that he could be kept quiet, and by his master's side by a look or the wave of his hand. Mr. Howard trusted much more to his dog's instinct to warn him of the approach of any stranger, than he did to his own quick ears and keen

gray eyes. So little confidence had he in his skill as a marksman, and in the efficiency of Peter's old musket, that he proposed to go to his post without that weapon, but he was prevailed upon by his wife to take it. The dog gave his master such an inquisitive look, as he started off with the gun on his shoulder, that Mr. Howard turned to his wife and said, "See, Sarah, even old Rover is surprised at my strange armament"; to which she only replied by a smile.

Mr. Morris, armed with his long and heavy rifle, after addressing a few words of caution to his wife, quickly moved off in an opposite direction to that taken by Mr. Howard. The two men had, before starting out, agreed upon a signal to be given—the firing of a gun—in the event of discovering any lurking savage, when both were to return immediately to the camp.

As soon as Mr. Howard and Mr. Morris had left, the entire party retired to rest excepting Joseph and the two negro men. The latter lit their cob pipes, and, seated upon a mat of pine straw, exchanged a few words in whispers. Joseph had also collected a mat of pine straws, and with a saddle for a pillow, and a blanket wrapped around him, had lain down, but so strained were his ears to catch every sound that he could not sleep.

The wolves, then very numerous in that section, soon surrounded the camp—attracted, it was thought, by the scent of the food which had been cooked, and for some hours they kept up their dismal barking, but this had been of such common occurrence lately that it excited no alarm or surprise.

About midnight, a sudden cessation in the barking of the wolves, on the hills south of the camp, attracted

the attention of Peter, who had passed so many days in the forest with his master, when surveying, that he was quite an expert woodman and skilful hunter, attentive to every passing sound from beast or bird. Turning to Joseph, who was near him, in an undertone he said : "If de barkin' of dem wolves has kep' you 'wake, yous ken now go ter sleep."

"No," replied Joseph, "they have not kept me awake ; and I don't feel sleepy."

"Hear dat ?" said Peter, again addressing the boy, "hear dat owl ? Dat 's a big horn-owl. He 's got a full belly, or he w'u'd n't make dat hoot. But, by-hoky, dar 's 'nuther on tuther side hootin' back ! Ise bin in de woods many nights, but I neber he-ars dem big-eyed owls hoot dat way dat it don't gib me de col' shivers ! Dar 's allers sumfin in dar hoot what sounds like de wail of de departed spiruts of dead folks."

"Why ! uncle Peter, you don't believe——"

But before Joseph could complete his question, the loud report of a gun reverberated through the wood.

"Dat 's my ole gun !" exclaimed Peter, forgetful of the injunction of silence. "I knows dat report, but, by-hoky, I 'll bet Massa haint killed no Injun, nor nuffin else."

A few moments later both Mr. Howard and Mr. Morris entered the camp, and were soon joined by their wives and servants, for all had been aroused by the report of the gun, excepting some of the younger children who, dreaming of no danger, slept more soundly than the rest.

Mr. Howard soon explained that his attention had been attracted by the unusual proceedings of his dog, which, several times, while lying by him, erected his

bristles angrily, but without making any other sign. "A few minutes later," Mr. Howard continued, "I heard the hooting of an owl—at least, what sounded like it, and knowing that Indians often exchange signals by mimicking the cries of night-birds, my suspicions were aroused, when, suddenly, old Rover not only bristled up but uttered a very ferocious growl; and, looking in the direction indicated by the dog, I caught a glimpse in the darkness of some moving object distant some forty or fifty yards, at which I fired; but I am quite sure I did not hit it, for my ears told me that it retreated rapidly over the hill. I am satisfied," he added, "that the object I saw was a man, and doubtless an Indian; for, had it been some beast of the forest, old Rover would not have growled so fiercely, and would, after I had fired, shown some disposition to bound forward to the attack, instead of which he remained close to my side."

"Yes, Mahs Kit, dat wus a Injun you seed," said Peter, who, in an emergency like this, felt that he was warranted in expressing his opinion. "Kase it mus-a-bin a human bein' a comin' down dat hill what made dem wolves over dar stop barkin', jist 'fore you fired. An' de hootin' of dat big horn-owl! I wus a listnin' ter it, an' now I cum ter tho't 'bout it, de hoot wa'n't jist a-cordin' ter natur', tho' 't was mi'ty nigh it, 'cept de las' part o' de hoot, was cut mi'ty short."

As there no longer remained any doubt that hostile Indians were close at hand, Mr. Morris, who was ever a prompt man, and given to few words, turned to Mr. Howard and asked him if he had reloaded his gun.

"No," was the answer. "And here, Peter, you take it," Mr. Howard continued, "for you can handle

it better than I can. Load it quickly, and if we have to fight, by George ! give it to the imps. And you, Sarah," he said, addressing his wife, "bring me my Jacob-staff, for, pointed and iron-shod as it is, it is just the weapon for me ! And Fanny," he added, turning to his negro cook, "bring me the large butcher-knife."

"And you, Stephen ! you and Ben get your axes," said Mr. Morris. "And look alive !" he exclaimed, seeing their movements were not so quick as he desired.

"Well, Joseph, what are you going to do if we have the Indians upon us ?" asked Mrs. Howard, who had returned with the Jacob-staff, and was apparently as cool and collected as any one of the party, though her heart must have been weighed down by anxiety ; for she was not only a loving wife but a most devoted mother, and four of her children were standing by her side, and two others—the youngest—were asleep near her.

Joseph, who seemed to think that he should, like good Mrs. Howard, do what he could to dispel any gloom that hung over the party, answered very promptly : "I have a hatchet, and will do all I can to protect your daughters, and particularly your little Laura and our little Mary."

The boy did not aim to make a gallant speech, nor mean to limit his assistance to the girls alone, but he was thinking at the moment of Harriet and Nora who were before him, and of their two little sisters, Eva and Laura, who were asleep. His reply pleased Mrs. Howard very much and, turning to her daughters, she nodded her head at them and said, "There now !" as

if she meant to assure them that they would be safe in any event ; and Mr. Howard quietly exclaimed, as he stuck his Jacob-staff in the ground, " Bravo, my lad ! " Then turning to his two little sons, Thornton and William, aged seven and five respectively, he added encouragingly, " You chaps keep a sharp look-out through the bushes."

Stephen on returning with his axe, brought with him his long ox-whip, the handle of which was a dry, elastic hickory rod, and the cord, composed of strips of leather braded so as to be round, was tipped with a lash of rawhide. Peter observing this—for what is more attractive in the eyes of a negro wagoner than a good whip ?—said, in a good-humored way, " Look-ee he-ar, nigger ! What 's yous goin' ter do wid dat whip ? "

" Just yous keep dat fly-trap o' yourn shut, an' dem eyes o' yourn open," was the jocular, boastful reply of Stephen, " an' yous 'll see what I 's goin' ter do, ef enny o' dem Injuns cum clos' ter dis nig ! Why, see he-ar, Souf Calliner," for so he designated Peter— " gib me a clare swing, an' wid dis he-ar whip Ise c'u'd pick de eyes out'en a Injun at twenty foot ; or Ise c'u'd, wid a twelve-foot reach, wind de whip 'roun' a Injun—perwided de Injun war' a standin' up—so as ter bind his arms, or trip him up by a jerk, which 'ud gib me time ter spank down on ter him, an' finish de work wid de axe. Humph ! dis nig knows what he 's 'bout."

Everything being now in readiness for the defence, the women and children were placed in as secure a place as possible, and the men took their positions at the different small openings made in the screen of pine

branches, to look and listen for any approaching foe, in which duty Joseph was permitted to share.

Slowly and silently the hours passed, but no attack was made—nothing occurred to alarm the camp. It was thought, however, that the Indians, after their inspection of the camp, had only been deterred from some sort of depredation by the vigilance of the "movers."

The stars, one by one, faded from the heavens as the rosy dawn lit up the east, and, ere the sun had risen, the journey was resumed.

CHAPTER III.

Arrival in Knoxville—Joseph Rescues Little Laura—Mr. Morris Leaves for the Cumberland Valley—Hard Work—Jos. Adair a Soldier—His Apprenticeship Ends—Visits his Father, Tom Adair—Revisits Knoxville—His Disappointments and Resolutions—Joined by his Brother, William—Visits Mr. Morris—Gets News of the Howards.

ABOUT a fortnight after the events narrated in the preceding chapter, Mr. Morris and Mr. Howard, with their families, arrived in Knoxville. This, as before stated, was as far as Mr. Howard purposed going ; and he fortunately succeeded in renting a house in which he and his family were soon comfortably domiciled. The winter being upon them, and the roads in bad condition, Mr. Morris also concluded to remain there for some months. He succeeded in renting a farm-house near which there was an unoccupied building which could be used as his saddlery shop. The farm and shop were a mile or more from town, but work soon flowed in, and Mr. Morris and his apprentice, Joseph Adair, had as much as they could do.

During the winter, Joseph had no leisure to visit the Howards excepting on Sundays. He was always received and treated by them with such kindness that his attachment for the family steadily increased. The

beautiful little Laura, who was then about two years old, and could prattle very sweetly, soon showed a singular fondness for her "Dody," as she called Joseph, and was never so pleased as when he led her around by the hand or carried her in his arms.

When making one of his visits to the Howards, Joseph saw little Laura alone in the road, which, opposite the house, passed through a narrow lane; and at the same moment he saw a pair of runaway horses, attached to an empty wagon, coming at full speed along the lane. He at once rushed to the child's rescue, and, grasping her in his arms, attempted to spring out of the way, but he was knocked down, without, however, being seriously hurt. The child was unharmed. Mrs. Howard, who was looking for her "baby," as she called little Laura, witnessed the accident and ran to the brave boy's assistance. Joseph was afterwards in even greater favor with the family than before, and was often spoken of as the rescuer of their darling little Laura.

But Joseph's happy days with the Howards were soon to terminate. The winter having passed, Mr. Morris determined to resume his westward journey. He had heard so much of the magnificent timber and fertile soil of the valley of the Cumberland River that he resolved to remove thither. In the spring of 1806, as soon as the roads were in fair condition, a start was made. Mr. Howard and his wife and children were present to bid their friends and former companions good-by.

When the parting word had to be spoken, Mrs. Howard took her little dimpled and rosy-cheeked Laura in her arms, and turning to Joseph said, "Little Laura must have a kiss before you go."

"Yes—yes," replied the boy, and the kiss was heartily given. Then taking from his pocket a small but beautiful green pebble he handed it to Mrs. Howard, and said: "Take this for little Laura to wear around her neck, so that she won't forget me. I found it in a small branch among the mountains of old North Carolina."

Mrs. Howard, on accepting the pretty pebble, said: "Laura will, as she grows older, often hear us speak of you, my dear Joseph, and will no doubt greatly prize the little memento from the brave boy who saved her life."

The lonely boy turned away with a sad heart, for he felt a peculiar sympathy and tenderness for that child —such as he had never felt for any other.

The partings over, the word was given by Mr. Morris; then came a loud report from Stephen's whip—a kind of parting salute—and the teams were once more moving forward: the same personnel, horses, oxen, and wagons that had left Hillsboro the autumn before. Whither they were bound they knew not, excepting that they purposed settling on or near the Cumberland River, below Nashville, then a village of some four hundred inhabitants.

Early in July (1806), Mr. Morris and his family encamped on the northern bank of the Cumberland River, at the spot now occupied by the pretty and thriving town of Clarksville, Tennessee. There was then no house within several miles. A rude hut was soon constructed; for, making this his base, Mr. Morris determined to examine the country for many miles around before he determined the exact spot at which he would locate. A few weeks later he selected a spot

near where now stands the town of Springfield, in Robinson County, Tennessee. The country around was finely timbered, interspersed with gentle hills and fertile valleys, and the numerous small streams, gliding or rippling over pebbly bottoms, were as transparent as air. A few other pioneers were attracted to the same section about that time, so that when Mr. Morris had selected a spot for building on, and had cut, hewed, and hauled the logs together, he had enough neighbors, within a few hours' ride, to voluntarily come forward and assist him at his house raising. By October all was in readiness for the family to move in.

Here their laborious and humdrum life went on for about eight years. In the spring and summer it was plowing and sowing, and reaping and mowing ; in the autumn and winter, it was chopping and hewing, and hauling and building outhouses and fences ; and when the day's work was done there was corn to be shucked, and cattle to be fed and attended to. The females were kept equally busy, for, in addition to ordinary household duties, there was spinning and weaving to be done—nearly every article of wearing apparel being made at home. It was still "Work, work, work ! morning, noon, and night !" As the neighborhood filled up there was a good deal of saddlery work to be done, and much of Joseph Adair's time was required in the shop, which had been erected in one corner of the large yard which surrounded the house.

In June, 1812, the second war with Great Britain was declared. The cry for volunteers reached Tennessee, and many sprang forward from among the hills and hollows of the remote district where Mr. Morris had made his home. Joseph Adair was then but

eighteen years of age, an apprentice, and in delicate health. He may have inherited something of his father's martial spirit, or it may have been the lonely life, the grinding monotony, and the longing for change and excitement, but certain it is he wished to "go to the wars." Mr. Morris, however, opposed his wishes, and Joseph gave him credit for doing so not from selfish considerations, but from an honest conviction that he was not strong enough to endure the hardships and exposure of a campaign.

The war continued, and Joseph worked on until the summer of 1814, when the startling news came that Washington City, the nation's capital, was in danger; then, that the city, with its superb buildings, was burned, and the National Library destroyed. Joseph Adair, being then in improved health, and near the close of his apprenticeship, could no longer be restrained from joining an infantry company, which was raised in the surrounding counties and rapidly marched towards the seat of war. After reaching the mountains of Virginia, news came of the desperate engagement at Baltimore (September 12th), the death of General Ross, the British commander, and the termination of the war in the East. (The battle at New Orleans, the closing struggle, was not, however, fought until the following January.) Then came the long, dull march home, spiritless, because all—officers and privates—were disappointed at having had no share in the drama which had just closed.

After his discharge from military service, Joseph returned to Mr. Morris's, none the worse for his short and bloodless campaign; in fact, in improved health, and more self-reliant by reason of association and contact with comrades in arms.

On attaining the age of twenty-one, and being then a free man, Joseph Adair was the possessor of a good horse and accoutrements, and two hundred dollars in money,—one hundred of which, with a good outfit of clothing, was given him by Mr. Morris.

Although he had never felt any special attachment for any member of Mr. Morris's family, excepting for the youngest child—a very beautiful little girl named Ellen, then about three years old,—yet it was not without a sad heart that he saw the day approach when he must leave them,—leave the only spot in all the world which he could call home! What made the parting all the sadder was that both Mr. and Mrs. Morris, undemonstrative as they always had been, showed much more regard and affectionate sympathy for him than he had ever given them credit for. It made him inwardly accuse himself of having judged them too harshly. What especially surprised and touched him was the almost lavish addition Mrs. Morris had made to his stock of wearing apparel,—those many small articles which a man is apt to overlook or regard as non-essential, but which a fond mother would be sure to think her son required. Then, too, Mr. Morris had said to him should his health fail him, or should any accident befall him so that he could not work, "Come to us! make this your home!" And Mrs. Morris and all the children had joined in the request with so much earnestness that he could not doubt their entire sincerity. And then there were Matilda, and Stephen, and Ben! Great blinding tears stood in the eyes of the good old cook. And Stephen had always showed such a thoughtful regard for him, shielding him, as far as he could, from such night work as would make "dat cough o' yourn wus." And Ben had been

his playmate—his companion on many a fishing excursion on Sundays, and had always insisted "on choppin' de wood fur de shop fire, case yous kaint han'le de axe cientifex, likes dis individ'al."

But the parting must take place. Hands were grasped, earnest good-bys were exchanged, little Ellen was kissed, and then—Joseph mounted his horse and was soon out of sight.

But whither was Joseph Adair travelling alone? He knew not more than this: that he intended going first to Hopkinsville, Kentucky, for he had been told that he could certainly obtain employment there as a journeyman saddler; and, if so, he would remain there for a time,—how long would depend upon circumstances, but after a while he would travel on towards Northern Kentucky (Shelby County, where his father was living); the father whom he had not seen for eighteen years, and of whom he had no distinct remembrance. Joseph had written to and received several letters from him in recent years, and from these he knew his father was again a widower, and that his second family of children consisted of four sons and one daughter, none of whom Joseph had ever seen.

After working at Hopkinsville a few months, Joseph visited his father, Thomas Adair, and found him a much older-looking and feebler man than he expected, but retaining much of the vivacity and cheerfulness which had characterized him when young. The old man was very poor, and barely maintaining his family by the cultivation of a small farm, in which he was assisted by two of his sons, the others being too young to work. The youngest of the children was a very handsome boy named Daniel, who was about four

years old, and resembled somewhat his half-brother Joseph in this, that they both had very black hair and eyes and rather dark complexions. Dan was a resolute and self-possessed little fellow, and soon became quite a favorite with his "new brother,"—for so he spoke of Joseph.

After remaining a few weeks with his father, and providing as well as he could for the well-being of the family, Joseph again resumed his roaming. Within the year he was again in Knoxville, Tennessee, where, it will be remembered, he had parted from the Howard family. No sooner had he arrived there than he made inquiries for Mr. Howard, and learned, greatly to his disappointment, that he had removed some nine or ten years before to Kentucky, but to what town or county was not known. Joseph was more than disappointed, for of late he had thought much of little blue-eyed Laura, now nearly twelve years of age, and wondered if, when he met her, she would give him another kiss, and whether she ever wore around her neck the beautiful little green pebble he had given her. "Ah," he said to himself, as if half in jest and half in earnest, "this is nonsense—downright foolishness," and away he walked, whistling in an undertone, a habit of his when in a brown study; but he then and there resolved to find the Howards if he could.

From Knoxville, Joseph wrote to his brothers, William and Thomas, who had remained in Hillsboro; and, after informing them of his visit to their father, urged them to join him in Knoxville, where he would remain until he could hear from them, and then go with him to Kentucky. About three months afterwards, Joseph was, when very busy in a shop where he

had obtained employment, aroused by the entrance of a stranger,—a young man apparently not more than five- or six-and-twenty—who, after entering, stood erect and looked around but said nothing. One glance at the stranger's almost jet-black hair, black eyes, and straight but rather prominent nose, satisfied Joseph that he—the stranger—was one of his brothers, and approaching and looking him full in the face, he said :

" Is this William, or is it Thomas Adair ? "

" William," was the answer after a short pause.

The meeting between these two young men—these brothers who had been separated since early childhood, can, as the novelists say, be better imagined than described. Oh, how many questions there were to be asked ! how many answers required ! what minute sketches to be given !

Joseph soon learned that his brother Thomas was greatly inclined to come West. " But," said William, who spoke with a merry twinkle in his eyes, " would you believe it, old boy,"—and here he slapped Joseph on the shoulder,—" Tom 's got a wife, and, I can tell you, she is no dumb oracle, and likes to be consulted. And as Tom is now deputy-sheriff, and as she hopes he will soon be high sheriff, and adorn one of the big front pews in the Baptist Church, she gently intimated to Tom, in language not to be mistaken when emanating from an oracle, that he-had-better-stay-where-he-was ! and Tom stayed."

A few days later—it was in October, 1816—the two brothers left Knoxville for Hopkinsville, Kentucky ; and, on their way, visited Mr. Morris, remained with him several days, and were most hospitably entertained. This was the first visit Joseph had made the

family since his departure the year before, and the manner of his reception showed that he had a warmer place in the affections of every member of the family than he had supposed. He found that little Ellen was growing prettier every day, and was such a bright, romping little creature, and such a pet with her parents, as to give to the entire household an air of more animation and cheerfulness than had characterized it in former days. Joseph had, in his travels, purchased a pretty little gold locket, and when he hung this around the neck of his little favorite—Ellen—she went almost wild with delight, for it was not only her first piece of jewelry, but the only piece owned by any member of the family, if we except some brass rings which Matilda, the cook, wore to keep off the "rumatiz." Joseph's "nice present" to her little "pet and darling" touched the heart of Mrs. Morris, who, in return, as some "small recompense," insisted upon replenishing Joseph's wardrobe with a fresh supply of warm woollen socks, mittens, comforters, etc. Matilda, Stephen, and Ben were found to be as hale and hearty as ever, and "mi'ty glad ter see Mister Josef."

"I tells yer what it is," said Ben, addressing Mr. Joseph, "I has diskiver'd a hole in de creek down yonder whar yous ken ke'ch whappin' big goggle-eyed pearch 'bout as fas' as yous ken fro in yer hook."

This indirect invitation to go a-fishing Joseph was reluctantly obliged to decline, for he was fond of fishing, and was an expert in the use of the rod and line. He was, moreover, disposed to afford Ben the pleasure which he knew the poor black would derive from such an excursion, and the renewal of old associations. Ben was, however, recompensed in some measure for his

disappointment by a "big shiney" silver dollar, which he declared looked as big in his eyes as a "cart wheel."

After the brothers had arrived in Hopkinsville, William, who was a skilful cabinet carpenter, procured a shop, and was soon busily and profitably employed. A year or two later he married a Miss Sally McKee of Macminnville, Tennessee.

Joseph Adair, after remaining with his brother William for some months, resumed his roving life; and wherever he went he made enquiries for Mr. Christopher Howard. Thus passed about seven years of his life, during which he travelled and read much; but, obtaining no information, he almost despaired of ever finding the family to which he was so much attached. During these seven years of roaming he several times visited Mr. Morris; and, after his brother William had married, he repeatedly visited him; for not only was he greatly attached to him, but also to William's young and fair-haired wife. Early in 1825, Joseph was in Hopkinsville, on one of these visits to his brother, and had about made up his mind to cease his roving, abandon his search for Mr. Howard, and make Hopkinsville his home, when he got acquainted with a journeyman saddler named Knapp, who had travelled much in Western Kentucky, and to whom he put the same old question—"Have you, in your travels, ever come across a man named Christopher Howard?"

Mr. Knapp, after pondering a moment, answered, "Yaws; there 's a farmer and surveyor called Kit, or Squire Howard, who lives down in Livingston County, near Salem."

"Can you tell me anything of the man,—of his per-

sonal appearance, etc.?" was the next and eager question.

"Wall, let me see," Knapp answered, meditatively. "I done some work for him wunst; an', when he come to pay me, he did n't complain of my charges,—said they was mod'rate. That 's what few men ever does. But that aint tellin' you what kind of a lookin' man he is. Wall, he 's 'bout fifty to fifty-five years old, say five foot nine to ten inches high, brownish ha'r, which he gin'rally w'ars long; and gray eyes, if I don't disremember. He lives nigh on to five miles from town an' yet he always walks in unless it 's tar-nation muddy, while most men ride if they 've a mile to go."

"That is certainly the man I have so long tried to find!" mused Adair; and then asked: "Do you know any of the members of his family?"

"Yaws; there 's Thornton, his oldest son; he 's a young lawyer, so I 've heard, but he don't live in them parts now; an' there 's some darters married, an' some at hum;—tar-nation spankin' gals, so I 've been told; but I never seed none on 'em as I knows on."

"And what sort of a place do you think Salem would be for a saddlery shop?" Adair asked.

"Wall, there 's one slip-shod shop there. There 's a right smart o' bisness don' in Salem, an' a good shop would likely do bang-up."

Adair thanked Mr. Knapp for the information given him, and at once made up his mind that to Salem he would go, as soon as he could make his arrangements.

Whether he would make that his home would depend on circumstances.

CHAPTER IV.

Joseph Adair's Meeting with Laura Howard—Adair Introduces himself to the Howard Family—A Warm Reception—Laura Howard as an Artist.

ONE afternoon, in the summer of 1825, when Mrs. Christopher Howard and two of her daughters were returning home, on horseback, from services at the Union Meeting-house, the elder of the daughters said: "Mother, I was told to-day that old Mrs. Lay is very sick. Do you mind if I ride by and see how she is?"

"I'm sorry to hear it," replied the mother. "Some of us ought to go and see her; and you may do so. And remember to ask if there is anything I can do for her. I wonder if she finished the warping of that cloth, before she was taken sick. If not, tell them to let me know, and I will come over to-morrow and finish it for her; for I know she is anxious for Eliza to go on with the weaving. And mind not to ride too fast, for that young horse of yours is hardly bridle-wise, and none of the gentlest; and if you go dashing along, as you sometimes do, you may get thrown."

"All right, mother," replied the daughter, "Jerry and I understand each other. He 's only dangerous when he fears a pair of spurs; but I 'll be careful."

Then saying "By-by," she turned from the main road, and was soon cantering along one which led through the woods for a mile or more, and terminated at Mrs. Lay's house.

An hour later Miss Howard was again in the main road where she had parted from her mother and sister, and saw in advance of her a gentleman on horseback, riding very slowly. "I wonder who that is!" she said to herself. "He must be a stranger! I don't think I have ever seen him or his horse before. And, oh my, how very lame his horse is!"

She soon overtook the gentleman, and, when abreast of him, he, observing her, bowed and said: "Excuse me, Miss, for I am a stranger here. Can you tell me how far it is to Salem? My horse is very lame, as you may see, and I am anxious that he should have rest."

"The distance, sir, is about five miles," she answered, in a clear musical voice. "But, sir," she added, "I fear your horse is too lame to go that distance. My father lives on this road but a short distance from here, and he will, I am sure, take good care of your horse and loan you another to go on to town."

"That would be very kind of him," replied the stranger. "And may I ask your father's name?"

"Howard, sir," was the prompt answer.

"Ah!" exclaimed the gentleman, who was none other than Joseph Adair; who, then, whilst avoiding anything like an impertinent stare, looked more critically at the young lady than he had before done. "Can this Mr. Howard," he thought, "be Mr. Christopher Howard? It almost certainly is! And this is one of his daughters; but which one? Is it possible this can be Laura? She is apparently about the right

age ; yes, little Laura should now be about twenty years old ; and she is certainly very beautiful, as I always imagined Laura would be. What an animated face, and what lovely blue eyes ! " Then, fearing lest his protracted silence should surprise his fair companion, he resumed in a composed manner. " Can it be," he said, " that your father once lived in Knoxville, Tennessee ? for in that town I once knew a gentleman named Christopher Howard."

" My father's name, sir, is Christopher Howard, and he once lived in Knoxville." And, having said this, she felt much inclined to ask the gentleman *his* name, but she hesitated, thinking he would soon inform her.

" The Mr. Christopher Howard whom I knew," said the gentleman, " had—let me see—yes, he had six children : two daughters, Harriet and Nora ; then two sons, Thornton and William ; then another daughter, Eva ; and last, *such a pretty child*, named *Laura*."

At the mention of her name in so marked and yet so respectful a manner, accompanied by a look of such apparent interest, the young lady became so agitated that she let fall her riding whip ; seeing which, the gentleman quickly dismounted, and having recovered the whip, handed it to her with a peculiarly pleasant smile. By the time he had remounted, she had recovered sufficient composure to apologize for the trouble she had given him, and continuing, said : " You have mentioned correctly the names of my brothers and sisters who are older than myself, and—my name is Laura. And now——"

She was interrupted by the gentleman, who said, in a pleasant and rather humorous manner : " Oh, you

were going to ask *my* name. Now, had I asked your name, I should consider it only fair to tell you mine."

"Oh, sir, but you——"

"Nay—nay," he said, again interrupting her, "I only asked your father's name, and spoke of a pretty child named Laura, when you told me——"

"But, sir," exclaimed the young lady, "that——"

"Don't apologize," he said quickly. "It was not quite fair for me to have spoken thus; and, if I have annoyed you, I must ask your pardon. But," he went on, "before telling you my name, permit me to ask if you remember ever to have been nearly run over by a wagon."

"Oh, sir," she answered in an agitated manner, "I do not remember it, but my mother has often told me of how I was once saved, by a brave boy, from being run over, and perhaps killed."

"And does it so happen," resumed the gentleman, "that you now have, or ever had, among your trinkets a little green pebble?"

"I have it, here!" she answered, with ill-concealed excitement in her voice and manner, as she exhibited the glittering pebble, which was fastened to a small chain that hung around her neck. "And you"— she went on with unfeigned earnestness in her voice and manner—"you are Joseph Adair! I know it!"

"I am," was the low but distinct answer.

"Oh, how glad I am," she exclaimed, "to see you! When I was but a child, you saved my life! You gave me this beautiful stone! Oh, how glad we will all be to see you!"

"I am indeed glad," said Adair, in a somewhat tremulous voice, "to know that I have not been for-

gotten by you all, and I am specially pleased to find you wearing the pebble I gave you when I parted from you, a child, years ago. But now tell me," he went on, "about your parents, brothers, and sisters. I hope all are alive and well."

In reply she told him—and her expressive face was all aglow with animation as she spoke—that her father and mother were well, and that her brother Thornton and her sisters Harriet, Nora, and Eva were married and all doing well.

"Then you are not married?" he quickly asked.

"No, sir," she blushingly replied. "But tell me," she quickly added, "tell me about yourself; where your home is; how long you will be with us, or remain in Salem."

After briefly telling her of his life up to the close of his apprenticeship, of the visit he had made to Knoxville, of his disappointment when he found that her father and the family had moved away, etc., he added: "I have since, as a journeyman saddler, travelled much, and wherever I went I made inquiry, but it was only a few weeks ago that I learned where your father lived; and my object in coming here was mainly to see you all."

"Then you are unmarried and have no settled home," she said. "Oh, how I wish you would remain —that you would make your home near us! We would all be so pleased!"

"I cannot tell you how glad I am to hear you say so," he replied. "And," he added after a thoughtful pause, "I may conclude to make my home in or near Salem. And is that your father's house?" he continued, as they came in sight of a two-story house, of

hewn logs, which sat back some distance from the road and was surrounded by large black locust trees. "Is that your home?" And when she had replied in the affirmative, "Then," he resumed, "I think I must accept your kind invitation and stop for a while; and, if it is entirely convenient for your father to let me have another horse, I will leave my old comrade with him that he may rest. Besides," he smilingly added, "that will give me a good excuse to come back and see you."

"I hope," she frankly responded, "you will require no excuse for coming to see us whenever you are so inclined."

"I thank you heartily," he said; and then added: "But I want you to promise me not to tell any of your father's family who I am, and leave me to introduce myself."

"I will try," replied the conscientious young lady, "but I am not sure I can remain in your presence and yet act as if you were an entire stranger."

Mr. Howard, who was sitting under one of the shade trees in his yard reading, hearing the tramp of horses' feet, looked up, and seeing his daughter and a stranger approaching, went forward to the gate to meet them.

As soon as the gentlemen had exchanged salutations, Adair at once spoke: "Pardon me, sir," he said, "I am a stranger here, on my way to Salem. My horse having fallen very lame, I took the liberty of asking this young lady—your daughter—how much farther I had yet to travel; and, after informing me, she kindly suggested that you could perhaps take temporary charge of my lame horse and provide me with another to go on to Salem."

"Certainly, sir, certainly," replied the hospitable

Mr. Howard. "Get down and rest yourself. You shall have another horse; you can take this one of my daughter's, and yours shall be well cared for. But come into the house! Supper is about ready, and you will, I hope, break bread with us."

On entering the house, Mr. Howard, in a few words, stated to his wife what the gentleman had said to him, whereupon she welcomed him, and, after inviting him to be seated, joined in Mr. Howard's invitation to remain for supper.

Mrs. Howard, Adair observed, had become a rather stout and gray-haired matron, but retained much of the vivacity and all of the kindliness of manner that had characterized her when he last saw her. Supper was soon announced, and before it was over the stranger was asked, by Mr. Howard, what part of the country he was from.

"I was born in North Carolina," the gentleman answered, "but, when I was quite a small boy, I left that State with a family who moved to Tennessee." And, after a slight pause—during which he noticed Mrs. Howard observing him very attentively, and that Miss Howard's face was somewhat flushed,—he continued: "The family settled first at Knoxville, but afterwards moved farther west."

At the mention of Knoxville, Mrs. Howard appeared as if she were about to rise from her seat, but she was checked by Mr. Howard, who said: "Ah, indeed! I once lived in Knoxville for a year or two. About what year was it when you were there?"

"Let me see," answered the stranger, musingly, "how old was I then; yes—yes, it must have been in the year 1806."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mr. Howard. "Why, that is the very year I lived there." Then, after a pause, he asked, "And did you ever know a man there by the name of Howard—Christopher Howard?"

"Howard! Howard!" queried the stranger, passing his hand across his forehead as if to refresh his memory. "Yes, I think—I am in fact quite certain I did. He was—let me see; yes, he was, if I remember correctly, from South Carolina, was a surveyor, and had a——" Here the speaker paused for a moment and glanced at Miss Howard, who appeared somewhat confused—apprehensive, possibly, of another allusion to a "pretty child." But no; the gentleman was too considerate to add to her embarrassment, which had already attracted the attention of her mother, and he continued: "Yes, and he had several children, and a fine dog—a large, well-trained cur, named Rover."

"Well, sir," exclaimed Mr. Howard, "I am that person! And will you permit me to ask——"

"What! my name?" said the stranger, interrupting him; and then added in a slow, distinct manner: "Have none of you any recollection of ever having seen me before?"

Before his question was fairly concluded Mrs. Howard had risen from her seat and was by the side of her guest—who, seeing her approach, had also risen to his feet—and, radiant with smiles, she held out her hands, saying: "I do! You are Joseph Adair!"

And scarcely had the young man said "I am," and grasped the extended hand of Mrs. Howard, than Miss Howard, unable longer to restrain her joyous excitement, clapped her hands and exclaimed "I knew it!" After the handshaking all round, and after warm

expressions of delight at meeting again, there had to be a partial explanation of the introduction which had taken place on the road, omitting, of course, any reference to the "pretty child" and the "pebble."

The supper over, the party withdrew to the wide, open porch in front of the house, when questions and answers rapidly followed. Adair gave his friends a short sketch of his life, and the only news they had ever received of Mr. Morris and his family. On the other hand, he learned that Mr. and Mrs. Howard had now eleven children, five sons and six daughters, four of whom, one son and three daughters, were married and at their respective homes, leaving seven under the paternal roof, the youngest of whom was a lad some seven years of age. Conversation was kept up until a late hour, Adair having gladly consented to remain during the night. The adventure with the Indian, years before, and the incidents in the camp the following night, were freely canvassed, and Adair was glad to learn that the blacks, Peter, Fanny, and Nelson, were alive and hearty; that although old Rover, the dog, had years before finished his course and stood his last watch, yet two of his progeny were then in the yard, but, whilst as brave and as watchful as old Rover, lacked his training.

All were much pleased when they learned that Mr. Adair thought of making his home in Salem; if, after investigation, he found there was a good opening for him, of which Mr. Howard assured him there was no doubt.

When the hour had grown somewhat late, Mrs. Howard spoke to her youngest daughter, a gentle, blue-eyed pet of about ten years of age, and reminded

her that it was time for a little miss like her to be in bed. The "little miss," however, seemed loath to leave, and it soon transpired that there was a certain important question bothering her little brain; and, impatient as childhood is, and inquisitive after the manner of her sex, she "threw a bomb-shell into the camp" by asking her mother—in what the child intended for a low voice, but which all present heard—"if that gentleman," nodding her head towards Mr. Adair, "was the boy that sister Laura put in her picture."

Mrs. Howard laughed heartily at the unexpected query; but not so Miss Laura, whose blushes and confusion occasioned some broad smiles and mischievous glances from her brothers. Mrs. Howard, however, promptly parried the little miss's question by asking Joseph—for so she addressed him—if he remembered to have given one of her children a present of a pretty little stone.

"Yes, madam," he answered. "I remember it well; it was the day we parted in Knoxville. It was a green pebble that I found in a small mountain stream in my native State, and I presented it, in part payment, for a—for a present made me by your then youngest daughter."

"Then, of course, you remember," said Mrs. Howard, "the same young lady's narrow escape from being run over in the road?"

"Indeed I do!" was the smiling reply. "And I hope the young lady has met with no more such incidents, and that she"—here he glanced at Miss Howard—"harbors no prejudice against such useful assistants as horses and wagons."

"None whatever," the latter replied, "for I am indebted to that incident and the precious stone—for such I am told it is—which you gave me, for the repeated mention of your name to me, and for the pleasure we all feel in welcoming you among us. And I sincerely hope there may now be some opportunity for us to repay the debt of gratitude that I, especially, owe you."

Joseph Adair keenly appreciated the evidently sincere and kindly words spoken by Miss Howard; but, looking into her blue eyes, he, in a deliberate and earnest tone, replied: "Please do not speak nor *think* of me again as a creditor of yours, nor of any member of this family; for, on the contrary, I feel that I am a debtor to all of you whom I knew in my somewhat lonely boyhood." Then, as if to turn the conversation into a more sociable channel, he turned to Mrs. Howard and playfully remarked: "But, madam, permit me to ask an explanation of Miss Sarah's remark about the picture."

"Ah! then I must tell you," replied Mrs. Howard, "that Laura is somewhat of an artist; that is, she is at least fond of making pictures; but I must refer you to her for the explanation you ask."

Miss Howard was a really modest young lady, but she was imbued with quick perception, and while she regretted that her little sister had let slip the secret—if such it could be called, for there had previously been no secret about the picture,—she saw that a frank explanation would, in the end, be the least embarrassing.

"My pictures, Mr. Adair," she said, "are, I fear, only daubs. I have never had a lesson in drawing or in coloring, nor have I ever been able to obtain water-

colors or oil paints, but have been limited to the use of such dyes and stains, I may call them, as mother and I have known of and could procure. So much by way of apology for the picture, which I will show you to-morrow. As for the subject aimed at, I must tell you that when I was a little girl, my mother told me of my life having been saved by a boy, some ten or twelve years of age, of whom she so often spoke that it naturally awakened in me a great desire to see and know my rescuer. I was further told of the pretty green pebble given me by the same boy, that I might not forget him. My gem—of which I confess I have ever been very proud—has, of course, served constantly to remind me of the giver, and of the circumstances, as related to me, under which it was presented. All this I tried, two or three years ago, to embody in a picture, in which some "movers'" wagons, ready for their journey, appear in the background, and, in the foreground, a mother holding her baby daughter in her arms, to whom—the child—a black-haired, black-eyed boy is presenting a pretty little stone. Of course, I have always called the boy in the picture by your name, and hence the question by my little sister."

Miss Howard's frank but modest speech touched Adair deeply. He had thought much of the pretty child that was now before him a beautiful woman. She, too, it appeared, had not only thought of him, whom she could not remember to have ever seen, but she had tried to conjure up his face and form from the realm of dreamland. Verily! "there were more things in earth and heaven" than were ever "dreamt of in man's philosophy." Then, might there not be sympathetic chords in human hearts, which, touched by

unseen fingers, give forth no sound that mortal's ear can hear, but which possess such heavenly harmony that celestial spirits catch the strains, and transmit them back to earth again to some responsive soul?

That night Joseph Adair felt stirring in his bosom a passion he had never known. The spark had long been there, but ne'er before the all-consuming flame. He tried to think, to reason calmly on the subject, for he was not one to be carried away by impulse, or to let his passions force him into a current too strong for him to resist. His heart said, "Strike while the iron is hot," but his reason said, "Look before you leap." Then came the thought: "She entertains, perhaps, a romantic and exaggerated notion of the debt of gratitude she owes me for having saved her life when a child, but her heart may long since have been given to another. Then, too, for years past I have been a wanderer. I may not like Salem; may soon grow tired and long to resume my roving life. And I am poor; have no home, no house; only a few hundred dollars in money, and my skill as a workman. If I have health I have no fears, but who 'knows what a day or an hour may bring forth.' Heigh, ho! I must wait." Then came a few hours of dreamy, unrefreshing sleep.

The next morning by early dawn, Joseph Adair was up and dressed. As he descended from his room and passed out through the porch, he met no one and went on to the stable to look after his horse. There he met both old Peter and his son Nelson, who, having learned who the stranger was, came forward, in their humble but respectful manner, and, shaking hands, expressed their great delight at seeing "Mars Josef" again. In

reply to their anxious enquiries, Mr. Adair told them of Mr. Morris and his family, and particularly of Stephen, Matilda, and Ben ; and then asked about his horse.

" Oh, Mars Josef," answered Peter, " he 's doin' fust rate. Ise don't know 'zactly what 's de matter wif him ; can't see no hurt ; 'spect he 's kinder sprained his paster-j'int. I washed it las' night an' rub'd on some operdildoc, an' it don't seem so sore dis mornin'. But, Mars Josef, he aint fit fur ridin' yit. 'Spect de bes' t'ing ter do wif him, is to turn him in de grass lot, whar he kin walk about a little, an' stan' in de branch an' cool his hoof, if he wants ter."

" All right, Uncle Peter," replied the gentleman, " I leave him in your care ; and, I think with you, it would be well to turn him in the lot where he can take gentle exercise. And now, Uncle Peter, where is Aunt Fanny ? for I must see and shake hands with her also."

" She 's in de kitchen, sar, gittin' bre'kfust. I 'll call her out, fur she 'll be mi'ty glad ter see you."

The kitchen was detached from the main house, and stood in a corner of the yard close by ; and when old Fanny—now grown to be very stout—came to the door, in answer to Peter's call, and saw the young gentleman, her broad, black face fairly glistened with delight ; and, hastily wiping her hands on her flaxen apron, and, waiting for no introduction, shook him warmly by the hand. " God bress de boy ! " she exclaimed. " What a man he 's growd to be ! An' I 's mi'ty glad ter see you ! We 's all glad ter see you ; 'tic'lar young missis, 'cause dat chil' 's mi'ty offen talked ter me 'bout de boy what grab'd her outen de way of de run-away wagon."

And the garrulous old darkey would have said much more, but at that moment, who should appear but Miss Laura, coming from the house to give some order about breakfast. She was skipping and bounding along the path through the grassy yard until she saw Mr. Adair, when she suddenly stopped, but soon came more slowly forward and, with a heightened color, took his proffered hand. After the usual morning salutation, "I hope," she said, "you rested well last night."

"Thank you," he replied, "but I cannot say I slept much, but it was not the fault of my bed, which was a more comfortable one than I have been accustomed to. I perhaps had too much to think about; and a busy brain, you know, is not a sleepy one."

When she had delivered her order and they were returning to the house, he smilingly resumed: "Seeing you so active and joyous this morning, I am sure you must have rested well last night, and had pleasant dreams."

"Oh, I fear," she replied, "I am rarely so quiet and sedate as I should be, and that there is more of the restless robin than of the quiet dove about me."

"But then!" he exclaimed, breaking out into impromptu rhyme—a not unfrequent mental performance:

> "When youth and beauty's pulse is throbbin',
> You well may be the 'restless robin';
> When age is sanctified by love,
> You then should be the 'quiet dove.'"

"Well done!" she cheerily exclaimed. "And now—

"Allow me, sir, to ask who wrote
The lines which you so aptly quote?"

"Professor Doggerel, of course!" he answered. "And I see," he humorously added, "that you are quite as familiar with his writings as I am."

But by this time they were at the house, and breakfast was soon announced. This meal is generally a hurried one, and more particularly was this, then, true in the West and South among slave-owners, who rose early in order to set the machinery for the day's work in motion. But this breakfast company was such a cheerful one, and there was so much pleasant chatting and talking, that the meal was unusually prolonged. As soon, however, as it was over, Mr. Howard rose and excused himself to his guest on the plea of having some pressing work to attend to; and, saying he would leave him in care of the ladies until dinner, walked away.

"Now for that celebrated picture!" said Mr. Adair, addressing Miss Howard, as they all adjourned to the porch, which, in such warm weather, was much more airy and comfortable than any of the rooms in the house. Miss Howard immediately withdrew to obtain the picture, which hung in her own room. But when in her room and alone she seated herself by the window. Her eyes wandered over a field of Indian corn in tassel, and over the green forest and high hills beyond, but she noted none of their beauties. She was thoughtful—appeared even sad. She had tried to think, the night before, but Ada, her sister, had plied her with so many questions, surmises, and conjectures, how could she? The dream of her life! was it to be a

veritable reality? He, whom she had seen only through the mist of imagination, was now a guest in the house! But was he what she had painted? Alike, and yet unlike! When she had first seen him, she was surprised by the contrast, but hour by hour the shadow and the substance assimilated. He was usually grave—grave almost to sternness, but, underneath, there was a vein of pleasantry and even playfulness. He had shown this in the manner of introducing himself to her on the road, to the family at the table, and his rhyme about the "restless robin" and "the quiet dove." And yet he did not look as if he would have much patience with any one who crossed him. His eyes, too, were so black and piercing, they almost made her tremble. Thoughts like these passed rapidly through the fresh intuitive mind of this country maiden. Strangers she rarely saw. Is it, then, any wonder that when she saw one,—and more particularly *this* one who interested her so much, and around whom clustered so many dreams,—she should try to analyze the man by the first impressions made upon her? But she should not sit there longer. He might be surprised at her lengthened absence. "And, besides," she said to herself, "the sooner this picture show is over, the sooner I will get over my nervousness."

As soon as she appeared on the porch, her mother, who had noticed her long absence, playfully said to her, "Have you been retouching your picture?"

Now, 't is a well known psychological fact that young ladies, when embarrassed, are much more apt to make seemingly rude remarks than polite and pleasant speeches. So it was on this occasion. Besides, Miss

Howard had never been nurtured to put a strict guard over her speech, but allowed, like a wild bird, to warble at her own free will. Hence, no sooner was her mother's question asked than she replied: "Only making the boy's face one shade darker, and cleaning the baby's face."

Of course, Mrs. Howard and Mr. Adair laughed at her sally. But was *his* a genuine laugh? Was there not something feigned about it? Such were the questions that instantly flashed across Miss Howard's mind, and, handing Mr. Adair the picture, she exclaimed: "Oh, Mr. Adair, forgive me for so rude a speech; of course, I only jested."

"Forgive you?" he said interrogatively, and speaking very earnestly. "Certainly! I know you would not paint me darker than I am."

He then bent his eyes upon the picture, which he examined long and attentively. The ideal likeness of himself was, of course, wide of the mark, excepting the black hair and eyes; but there was the fitting show of sadness in the face, and even traces of tears. The child had also a shade of sadness in her dimpled face and soft blue eyes; and while with one chubby hand she clutched the green pebble and pressed it to her lips, with the other hand she pointed to the wagon and running horses in the distance, from which the boy had rescued her. The mother's features were given with much fidelity.

"Well," said Mr. Adair, after his long and apparently close inspection, "I suppose you expect me to tell you what I think of your picture?"

"Certainly," answered the young lady, "but, in pity, be not too severe in your judgment."

"No danger of that," was the reply, and with evident candor he continued: "I am, of course, no judge of such work. I must, however, say that, after what you have told me, I am surprised at your skill. You evidently have a natural aptitude, or talent, for both drawing and coloring. The perspective of your picture strikes me as good, and the proportions of the several objects and figures accurate. In a few words, the picture, merely as such, pleases me, whilst with *the subject*, *I* can but be deeply impressed."

There was so much of seriousness in Mr. Adair's tone and manner that Miss Howard, on receiving the picture, looked and bowed rather than spoke her thanks for his commendation, and withdrew, to hang the picture again in its accustomed place.

CHAPTER V.

Joseph Adair and Ada Howard—A Fishing Excursion—The First Trout Caught and the Wager—Accident to Laura Howard, and her Rescue by Adair—Ada's Good Samaritan.

WHEN again in her room, Miss Howard seated herself by the window. She felt restless, uneasy, distressed ; but why, she would have found it difficult to explain. Hers had always been a hopeful, joyous nature ; never had the surface even of her heart been ruffled by a storm ; it had ever remained as smooth as a sheltered lake whose clear waters reflect the trees upon its shore, the clouds that float over it, and the naughty stars that peep down into its bosom.

And who and what was this man to her ? (Such were her thoughts.) He had come to-day and would be gone to-morrow ; and what had been a pleasant dream would remain but the memory of a dream dispelled, an illusion vanished, a song ended. And what had he thought of her ? How could he, so grave and thoughtful, think of her otherwise than as a frivolous, visionary, dreaming girl ; unfitted, by nature and education, for the duties, cares, and trials of womanhood. Then tears came into her eyes, but she quickly dashed them aside. "This will never do !" she mentally exclaimed. "Why should I—but——. No ! I will go back,"

And, glancing into her little mirror, which hung near the window, to see that no tell-tale traces of her tears remained, she returned to the porch. She found that her mother had left to attend to some household duties, and that Mr. Adair was pleasantly chatting with her sister Ada.

Ada was just "sweet sixteen," had wavy dark hair, blue eyes, and beautiful but delicate features. She was generally diffident, even to timidity, but her sister found her talking with Mr. Adair at a most surprising rate, and in such a spirited manner that he rewarded her with several bursts of hearty laughter. During much of this conversation, Miss Howard sat close by, an attentive listener, but only taking part when necessity or politeness demanded. No one could have been more surprised than she was that Mr. Adair had so readily broken through the ice of her sister's timidity. But, the truth was, he had soon discovered Ada's diffidence, and had kindly and intelligently set to work to remove it; and so successful was he, that Ada finally ventured on a little pleasantry at her elder sister's expense. After having referred to some of her own experiences as a school-girl, she suddenly added: "And, Mr. Adair, sister Laura, when at school, could outrun any of the boys of her age, and she could dance all night and not get tired." And not satisfied with this tribute of praise, she went on: "And do you know what Aunt Fanny, our old cook, says of her? That sister is 'as active as a cat, as gay as a lark, as lively as a cricket, and as'—oh, what 's the balance, sister?"

"Oh, you 've remembered more than enough," was the blushing reply; for Miss Howard was secretly annoyed by her sister's praise.

"I can perhaps finish it for you," said Mr. Adair, addressing Ada. "As restless as a robin, as quiet as a dove, as pretty as a pink, and as blushing as——"

"Well, that 's not exactly it," interposed Ada, "but it comes close enough."

But Mr. Adair, observing that Miss Howard appeared somewhat embarrassed, and fearing lest he had made an unpleasant, if not imprudent speech, quietly added, still addressing Ada: "Oh, you spoke, a while ago, of fishing. Now, I must tell you, I am no Nimrod, but I am so very fond of fishing that I always carry tackle with me; and, if there is any stream near, I would like to try my luck, *provided* you will both go with me. Now what say you?"

"At the base of yonder hills," replied Miss Howard, pointing to a range beyond her father's fields, "there is a creek in which, at times, there is good fishing; and Ada and I would be glad to accompany you, but I fear we would only give you trouble and detract from your sport."

"Now, what do you say, Miss Ada?" asked Mr. Adair.

"Oh, I 'll go," she quickly answered, "*provided* you 'll agree to bait my hooks."

"Agreed then," said Mr. Adair. "And when shall we start? It must be to-day; for, loath as I am to leave you all, I must go to-morrow morning."

"I am sorry to know you will leave us so soon," said Miss Howard, with evident earnestness. "However," she added, reflectively, "we hope to see you very often, now that you are going to make your home so near us."

"That is not determined yet," he replied, "but I

certainly purpose remaining in Salem for some months, if not permanently ; and, you may be assured, I will see you all as often as I well can. But, now, what about our fishing excursion ? ''

'' I have been told,'' replied Miss Howard, '' that early in the morning, or late in the evening, is the best time for fishing. I suppose about five o'clock, when the heat of the sun has subsided, will be the proper time to start. There are plenty of good cane poles about the house, for father, like yourself, cares nothing for hunting, but is a great fisherman, and he may possibly go with us.''

At dinner Mr. Howard expressed his regret that he could not accompany the fishing party ; then, turning to his guest, he added : '' If, Joseph, you take these girls with you, you will catch no fish ! Don't you know that no woman can fish ? If she can, she won't. I never saw one that knew how to bait her hook properly; never saw one that could hold the end of her pole out of the water two minutes at a time ! Then it 's gabble—gabble—gabble ; and, if you happen to get a nibble, they are certain to neglect their own lines in order to tell you ex-act-ly how to catch your fish.''

'' Oh, papa ! '' exclaimed Ada, '' how uncomplimentary you are ! But there are some things which even you will admit ladies can do better than gentlemen.''

'' And what may those things be ? '' asked Mr. Adair.

'' Oh ! for fear of getting up a discussion—and I do abominate discussions—I will only claim superiority for the ladies in knitting, darning, and sewing on buttons.''

"I don't think your mother would admit," growled Mr. Howard, but in an evidently good-humored way, "that *you* are very expert in such work."

"Now, papa," said the young lady, pulling him gently by the ear, "none of your tales out of school."

Mr. Howard soon arose to go about his work, and preparations were at once begun for the fishing excursion. Mr. Adair got out his tackle, and adjusted and tied the lines to the cane poles, while Nelson procured for them an abundant supply of angle-worms for bait. About four o'clock the sun was partially obscured by clouds, and the heat so mitigated that a start was made.

On their way through the intervening fields, Mr. Adair, after some good-humored badinage with Ada, said: "Now, I will make either of you a bet. You remember what your father said about ladies fishing! I will not be so ungallant as to say he was correct, but I will bet neither of you can pull your first fish out of the water and land it safely without a scream or exclamation of some sort."

"Done!" exclaimed the whilom timid Ada, who now felt much more free and easy in Mr. Adair's presence than did her older sister. "What shall the bet be?"

"That is for you to say. Anything you like."

"Well, let me see. I want a nice riding-whip. Sister Laura has one, but I have none."

At the mention of the riding-whip, Mr. Adair could not resist taking a covert glance at Miss Howard, who, observing it, and remembering the incident on the road, could not prevent a rosy blush from overspreading her cheeks and adding to the provoking

freshness of her lips. There was a magnetism in that blush, and in those lips, that sent the blood tingling through Adair's veins, but turning quickly to Miss Ada, he said : "All right ! I 'll bet you a nice riding-whip, but against what ? "

" There now ! " exclaimed the apparently crestfallen girl, " I must n't bet money, you know ; for that would be like real betting. And I don't know what you would like. If I could paint like sister, I would bet you a picture, in which there should be a stranger riding up to our house on a lame horse, and attended by a young lady."

" What a marvellous faculty the little witch has," thought Adair, " for slyly but gently stepping on a body's toes," but he said nothing, and Miss Ada soon continued :

" Or, better still, sitting at our table as if he did n't know who any of us were ; looking as grave as a judge, and all the time laughing in his sleeve at the surprise he had in store for us all, excepting sister ; and, by-the-way, I don't yet understand how you two got acquainted."

" Capital ! capital ! " exclaimed Mr. Adair, who did not care to enter upon any explanation of the introduction. " What a genius you have for invention, if not for execution ! But, as you can't paint the picture for me—which I regret, for I should certainly esteem it as a great treasure,—perhaps you might induce some one to paint it for you."

Miss Howard knew very well that the last suggestion was pointed at her, but for the life of her she could not readily have framed an answer. But Ada came to her relief by exclaiming :

"Oh, that would never do! You would not then appreciate it for *my* sake. I would say a pair of gloves, but I don't like to knit, and, besides, I 'm sure I could never make them to fit. But, what say you to a little bag of pop-corn? Do you love pop-corn?"

"The very thing!" he replied; and then, in a musing mood, went on: "When the winter comes on and I sit by the fire, and list to the wind as it whistles without, I 'll get out my skillet and, first, make it hot, then pour in my pop-corn and stir it about. And as the grains open and show me their hearts, I 'll think of the maiden——"

"Who ought to be there," interposed Ada, "and help you to eat it; for, of all things, it is the most unsociable to pop corn and eat it alone. For such a mortal the grains should never 'show their hearts,' as you call popping open, but should puff up with indignation and keep their jackets on."

"But, stranger as I am," replied Mr. Adair, "how am I to help it; what am I to do?"

"Oh, you 'll know plenty of people by that time," she answered. "Besides, you have n't won the pop-corn yet."

By this time they were at the creek; at a point where, after passing in rippling murmurs o'er a shallow, rocky bed, the current ran against an overhanging rocky bank and formed a slowly revolving pool, in the centre of which was a collection of foam. The spot was well shaded not only by the projecting rocks but by the overhanging forest trees.

"Ah!" whispered Mr. Adair, "there is just the spot to catch a solitary trout. Suppose, Miss Ada, you try it. But, stop, let me bait your hook and adjust

your cork. There now, drop your hook just beyond the foam and let it drift slowly towards this bank ; and remember our bet."

In went the hook as directed, and the cork floated slowly around, while the fixed stare and half-suppressed breathing of the slight and delicate girl showed how keen was her interest. Suddenly the cork disappeared ; a jerk ; and " I 've got it ! " burst from her lips. A moment later, and there dangled from a limb overhead a trout some eight or nine inches long, which was considered a fine one for that stream.

" Oh, Mr. Adair ! " went on the excited girl, " can't you get it down for me ? If it should get off the hook, it would fall back into the water. And, oh ! is n't it a beauty ? "

Mr. Adair could n't resist a hearty laugh at the excited, pleading girl, and, exclaiming in tones of mock solemnity, " Oh, that pop-corn ! " he soon freed the line and brought the fish safe to land.

" What did you mean," Ada wonderingly asked, " by saying just now, ' Oh, that pop-corn ! ' ? I have n't lost my bet, have I ? "

" I rather think you have," replied Mr. Adair, with assumed gravity. " Remember, you were to land the fish without screaming, or *uttering any exclamation*."

" Yes, but I could n't help it, you know ; it got caught in the limb ; and I had to say what I did."

" Grant that. But what about your exclamations, ' I 've got it ! ' and ' Oh ! is n't it a beauty ! ' ? "

" Oh, those were assertions, and true ones at that ; not exclamations, were they, sister ? "

" You must not call upon me," replied Miss Howard, " to decide between you and Mr. Adair."

"Well, what say you," interposed Mr. Adair, "to calling it a drawn bet? That is, I to get the pop-corn and you to get the riding-whip?"

"Agreed! agreed! And now won't you bait my hook again, and maybe I can catch another!"

"I doubt," he replied, "if there was more than one trout in so small a pool, and if there was, I fear we have frightened the others away; but, hand me your hook, I will bait it, and you can try again."

Ada did try again; but, receiving no bites, it took only a few minutes to exhaust her patience. The party, continuing their course down the stream, soon came to a long, dark, sheltered pool, under the brow of a steep hill, and across which there had fallen a large black oak tree, the top branches of which rested on the hillside where our party stopped to fish.

Mr. Adair, after baiting the ladies' hooks, pointed out the most likely-looking spots into which to throw their hooks. They were soon rewarded by catching a dozen or more small sun-perch.

So much of Mr. Adair's time was taken up by waiting on the ladies—taking off their fish and rebaiting their hooks—that he had but little time to fish himself, yet he succeeded in catching three or four larger fish than any caught by his fair companions. This was a source of much surprise to Ada, who, pinning her faith to Mr. Adair, fished as close to him as she conveniently could, never dreaming of rudeness or unfairness in doing so. She could not understand why it was the big fish chose his bait in preference to hers! Nor could it be explained in any other way than by what is usually termed "fisherman's luck." Such luck is, however, in most cases, the result of a skill

which, with many, is seemingly intuitive, and cannot be imparted.

After fishing for some time, Miss Howard said she intended walking out on the fallen tree, and fishing near the opposite shore where there was a clear space among the drift which had lodged against the fallen tree. It was indeed a "likely spot," and Mr. Adair had had his eyes on it for some time, but was unwilling to leave the ladies who so often required his assistance.

"I can easily assist you on to the fallen tree," he said, "and there would be little or no danger in your attempting to walk across; but I fear, if you attempt to stand on the trunk, you may, in handling your pole or pulling out your fish, lose your balance and fall into the water."

"I will be very careful," she replied, "and if, when I get out on the trunk, I feel that there is any danger, I will immediately return." Then, folding up her line, and using her cane pole as a walking staff, she was soon, without any assistance, on the trunk, and walked very steadily to the desired spot, when she unwound her line and threw in her hook.

Mr. Adair, who had been watching Miss Howard very closely, then turned to Ada and said: "I think I had better go out on the log also; for, even if no accident, should happen, your sister has no bait with her and if she catches any fish she cannot well take them off the hook and throw them to the shore."

"Yes, please go," said Ada, who felt some uneasiness at her sister's position. "And," she added, jestingly, "be careful that *you* don't fall in; for, if you do I won't promise to jump in and rescue you."

"All right!" was the smiling rejoinder; "I 'll be

careful for *your* sake ; and will return to your service whenever wanted." He then sprang upon the fallen tree, and well he did, for at that moment Miss Howard fell into the water.

She had scarcely thrown her hook into the clear space among the drift when she hooked a much larger fish than any they had yet caught. The fish, in its frantic efforts to prevent being drawn from its native element, dashed to and fro and soon fouled the line among the drift-wood ; and, not knowing this, Miss Howard gave such a vigorous pull that the line broke. This caused her to lose her balance, but, so active was she, that she would have recovered herself had not some decayed bark, on which she was standing, slipped from its trunk and precipitated her into the water, on the lower side of the fallen tree.

Adair sprang forward and extended his fishing-pole, crying to her to "take hold of it" ; but, partially strangled as she was, she either did not hear or could not heed him. He was by no means an expert swimmer, but at once plunged in to her assistance. When he had caught hold of her, she grasped him, and with her arms around his neck, clung to him with such tenacity that it was with much difficulty he could keep his head above water. In the meanwhile they had floated some fifteen to twenty feet from the fallen tree, to return to which he would have to swim against the current. Glancing hastily around, he saw that, below him, the banks on both sides were so high and steep that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for them to get out in that way. But, by following the course of the current for thirty or forty feet, he felt sure they would come to shallow water, and be able to walk.

Then speaking in a peremptory manner to his almost unconscious burden "to put her hands on his shoulders, but not to grasp his arms or neck,"—which instructions she tried her best to obey,—he struck out, and, sure enough, his feet soon touched bottom and all danger was over; for Miss Howard, though badly strangled, was at no time entirely unconscious, and after a few minutes' rest on shore, was able to speak to her sister who was kneeling by her side.

Ada, on observing the accident to her sister, rushed around the border of the pool, in doing which she had to pass a point where the hillside was very steep, and happening to step on a loose stone, she fell, and would have rolled over the bank into the stream but for a small tree which stopped her progress, and against which she struck with such violence as to bruise her arm severely. She further sustained, from striking a sharp stone, a slight cut on her left cheek near the chin, which bled quite freely. She, however, succeeded in reaching her sister by the time Mr. Adair had seated her on the soft grassy bank.

For a few moments after Miss Howard was seated she gazed about her in a somewhat dazed manner, until she observed the pale face of her sister, upon which there were traces of blood, when she cried out, "Oh, Ada! what has happened? what is the matter?"

"Oh, thank God, you are safe, darling sister! and I have only fallen and scratched my face. But, are you hurt in any way?"

"No, not hurt, I only feel dizzy; every thing around me seems to be moving—swimming!"

"That sensation," said Mr. Adair, "will soon pass off. But come, Miss Ada, let me look at that scratch,

for it is still bleeding some." And taking her by the left arm—the bruised one—to assist her in rising, it caused her much pain.

"Oh, don't touch it!" she cried out; "I hurt it badly when I fell."

"Do examine it, Mr. Adair," pleaded Miss Howard, who was now thoroughly alarmed.

The first glance showed traces of blood which had oozed through the sleeve of Ada's dress of printed calico. Adair, with his penknife, quickly split the sleeve from the shoulder to the wrist, leaving her small but white and beautifully rounded arm quite bare.

There was a large purple spot above the elbow, and below it a severe abrasion, but he could discover no evidence of any bones having been broken, of which he hastened to assure the sufferer. Then, seating Ada beside her sister, he tore off a strip of his wet pocket-handkerchief, and tied it around the arm over the abrasion. Then, going to the creek, he soon returned with a handful of soft black mud, which he spread, as a poultice, upon another strip of his handherchief, and bound it carefully over and around the bruised spot, which had the effect in a few moments of affording considerable relief.

Ada was outspoken in the expression of her thanks, winding up by saying, "Oh, how fortunate it is *you* were with us! Again you have saved my sister's life; and to poor wounded and bruised me"—she said with a faint, sweet smile—"you have been the good Samaritan."

"And I," said Miss Howard, in a low tone and in an abstracted manner,—"yes, I ought to thank you, oh how much, but—but——"

"Come, come," interposed Mr. Adair, pleasantly. "Enough of thanks. It would almost have been worth the ducking if you had secured that fish, which was evidently a large one. Nor must you accuse yourself of recklessness, nor even carelessness, for you would not have fallen but for the slipping of the bark from the trunk of the tree. And as for you, Miss Ada," he added, addressing her, "the scar on your face is but small, has now ceased bleeding, and will never mar your beauty. As for that lame arm, it will only keep you from *work* for a few days, and will not prevent your talking just as much as you please. But you should not let that arm hang down by your side. Give me your handkerchief, and with that and the remaining strip of my own, I will soon fix you a sling for it."

The sling having been adjusted, and Ada's arm placed in a comfortable position, Adair resumed, "There now, that 's fixed nicely! Now wait for a moment until I can collect our fish and tackle, and we will start for home."

On their way back but little was said. Mr. Adair did what he could to cheer up his companions, but Ada was now in some pain, and Miss Howard more reserved than usual; and, when spoken to, had to arouse herself as if from a deep reverie before she could reply, and then, usually, in monosyllables.

On arriving at the house, Joseph, in a few words, explained to Mrs. Howard what had happened, omitting, however, to dwell upon the danger to which her daughter had been exposed; but this, she readily conjectured, and one look at that daughter brought from her the prompt declaration: "Yes, mother, he has again saved my life." Whereupon the good woman

grasped Joseph by the hand, and in a faltering voice said : "Joseph, a *mother* thanks you *with—all—her—heart.*" Then, as if to hide her own weakness, she suddenly turned to her daughter and said, almost sharply : "Go, Laura, at once to your room, and get on dry clothing. I will send you a glass of cherry cordial which you *must* drink, and then lie down and take a nap if you can." Then, turning again to Joseph, she said : "My husband and sons have clothing from which you can select what you require. The articles shall be sent to your room at once." But he assured her he had everything in his saddle-bags which he required, and withdrew.

As soon as Mr. Adair had left the room, Ada explained to her mother all that had happened ; about the fall ; what Mr. Adair had done for her, etc.

"Well, well !" exclaimed the mother, after listening attentively to Ada's recital, "I thank the Lord you both had so cool and sensible a man with you ! The mud plaster is as good a thing as you could have on ; but I will look at it, and, if it is getting dry, will moisten it with some tepid water. Your arm, where it is skinned, must be bound up in a soft rag, greased with suet."

She had scarcely attended to this duty when her husband entered, to whom she hurriedly explained what had happened.

"I—wish—I—may—be—dashed !" exclaimed Mr. Howard, "if they were not lucky to get off as well as they did."

To Joseph, when he afterwards met him, Mr. Howard only said, "Sarah has told me all, and, my boy, I thank you" ; and then turned away as if to

relieve Joseph from the necessity of making any answer.

Mrs. Howard, after her interview with her husband, repaired to the room of her daughter to see how she was, and whether she had taken the cherry cordial, hoping thus to ward off a chill, which she feared would result from her having remained so long in her wet clothing. She found Laura re-dressed, and remained with her for some time in close and earnest conversation. She then sought her husband, and had a few earnest words with him, when supper was announced.

Miss Howard appeared at the table, but was still pale and unusually quiet; Ada, however, had recovered her spirits, and told her father of her bet with Mr. Adair, and how it had been decided.

"No man," replied the father, "should ever make a bet with a woman. If she wins, she is the most exacting of creditors. If she loses, and can't squirm out of it, she is sure, openly or secretly, to accuse the man who requires payment of ungallantry, to say the least."

This apparently bitter speech had only the effect to occasion some merriment. As for Ada, she declared that her father could not decoy her into an argument; that, in compromising the bet, she had accepted a proposition made by Mr. Adair, who was old enough to look after his own business.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Adair, "that 's the unkindest cut of all! You have called me *old*."

"Oh, now," Ada answered, "you know that I don't mean *really* old; and, to make amends, I 'll say *I* think you are exactly the *right* age."

"For what?" queried Adair, who seemed to be in a teasing mood.

"To pull out young ladies who fall into fishing pools, and to bind up the bruised arms of girls who roll down hill too fast," was the prompt reply.

"Yes," added Mr. Howard, "I cautioned Joseph before he started that, if he took you wild fillies along, he would have no luck, but I did not think he would be so unfortunate, and I 'm sure it will be many a day before he makes another such venture."

"On the contrary," replied Joseph, "whenever the ladies feel like going a-fishing again, I hope they will let me know, for I would be delighted to give such apt pupils a few more lessons; for, really, they were both so very quiet when fishing as to be acquitted of the sweeping charges you made at the dinner-table."

"Well, well," said Mr. Howard, "things do seem to have turned around! Laura, here, has lost a portion of her tongue, but this pussy," indicating Ada, "has evidently found it, for I never heard her tongue wag so fast as it has since we sat down."

"Now, papa," exclaimed Ada, "you just stop trying to talk cross, for you don't frighten anybody. Sister has a headache; and, as for me, if you don't like to hear me chatter, perhaps somebody else does. Don't you, mamma?"

"Certainly I do," was the smiling reply. "And if you were to talk and laugh more, you would perhaps get heartier and stronger."

When supper was over Mr. Howard and Adair took a walk to the grass lot to see how the latter's horse was getting along, and found him much improved by his rest. It was then Adair told his kind host that he pur-

posed leaving the following morning for town, but hoped to see him and his family again soon and quite often, for he now thought it almost certain he would make Salem his home.

"I have some business in town," replied Mr. Howard, "and will go in with you in the morning, and introduce you to any of my friends or acquaintances I may see. And remember, once for all, I wish you to consider me at your service whenever I can aid or assist you in any way." And, without giving Adair a chance to thank him, he continued: "And there is another matter I must mention to you; the *green pebble*, as you called it, which you gave to Laura when a baby. Some years ago a friend of mine, who professed to be something of a lapidary, examined it and pronounced it an *emerald*. I have since had it examined by others, and amongst them a Jew peddler, who offered two hundred dollars for it, and, I think, would have paid more for it, but he at once found it was not for sale. I have been advised to send it to some of the Eastern cities and have it cut; but Laura has preferred to retain it as it was when presented to her. Now, she has no real use for such a gem, and you, in order to establish yourself in business, may need some money. I am therefore not only authorized to offer you the stone, but urge you to accept it, so that its value—which may be as much as five hundred to one thousand dollars—may be put to some practical use."

"I clearly understand," replied Adair, "and fully appreciate the motive, Mr. Howard, that prompts this offer, and I am glad to know the stone is so valuable, but I decline it. True, I have, since the close of my apprenticeship, saved but little money, but I have

enough for my present purposes; and, with good health and a good trade, I do not doubt of success; so let us say no more about it."

And nothing more was said on the subject. Adair, however, often wondered with whom the offer had originated, but considered that it would smack of impertinence for him to ask. The truth was, it had originated with Miss Howard, who, notwithstanding her great reluctance to parting with a gem she prized so highly, around which had been woven many a romantic dream, and over which was now thrown—for she could no longer hide it from herself—a halo of love, yet, being one of the least selfish of her sex, readily braced herself to the performance of what she regarded as a duty, and mentioned the matter to her mother, who approved her course, subject to the decision of the husband and father, and he, as we have seen, was the spokesman.

CHAPTER VI.

Joseph Adair Arrives in Salem—Judge Gilroy—Amos Green—George Duncan—Adair Goes to Work—His Severe Illness—Horace Benton, a Unique Genius—Miss Ritchie—Benton's Ways.

THE following morning, Joseph Adair, after bidding his friends good-by and making many promises of another and early visit, and after suitably rewarding Peter for the attention shown his horse,—now free from lameness,—mounted and rode away. Mr. Howard preferred to walk by what he said was "a nearer and more shaded way, through the fields and forests," and promised to join Joseph at the Brick Hotel in Salem, where he recommended him to stop.

As he slowly rode along the dusty road, Adair reviewed and pondered over nearly every incident of his visit, especially those that pertained to Miss Howard. He confessed to himself that she was not only attractive but very beautiful, and intelligent and refined in her manners. Moreover, that she was considerate and unselfish was manifest from the affection shown her by every member of the family, including the servants. And it was she, doubtless, who had suggested the return of the pebble,—the emerald—to him; and yet how much it must have cost her to make the

offer! for that she greatly prized her "gem" was shown, not so much by her having refused a large sum of money for it, as by the fact that she had worn it about her neck from childhood. Then, her unwillingness to have the stone cut,—to exchange her green pebble for a costly emerald, was evidence of her steadfastness and fidelity to the old and familiar rather than to the new and novel. But was he not dreaming and constructing airy castles? And this was no time for dreaming, for he was approaching the town where he expected to locate, and should be looking around.

The village of Salem—or town as it was usually called—is situated on the western slope of a gentle hill, near the centre of an undulating valley four or five miles in diameter, and surrounded on all sides, excepting the south, by a chain of high hills, which at several points rise to the height of three to four hundred feet above the level of the valley. This valley was very fertile, and was dotted with farm-houses and fields. Most of the settlers had come from Virginia and the Carolinas, and many of them had brought slaves with them.

The town, which then contained a population, white and black, of about two hundred and fifty, was built mainly on a street or road running east and west, and which, near the western limit of the town, was crossed by a road running north and south. At the junction of these cross-roads had been laid off what was intended for a public square, containing about three acres, but this was never inclosed. Near the centre of this square, and in the northwest angle formed by the cross-roads, stood the Court House, a square, two-story brick building with one large room on the lower floor for the

court, and two rooms on the upper floor for jurymen, etc. Diagonally across from the Court House stood the office of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Courts, in a one-story brick building containing two rooms. Of the buildings in town, some half a dozen were of brick, the largest of which was the Brick Hotel. The remaining buildings were framed, or built of hewn logs, and most of them only one story high. There was no church in the town, and when it was occasionally visited by ministers of the Gospel, services were held in the Court House.

Adair, on entering the town, rode at once to the Brick Hotel, which stood on the south side of the main street about one hundred yards east of the Court House. He was there met by the Squire,—for so Mr. Howard, who was a magistrate, was generally called,—who introduced him to Judge Gilroy, the landlord.

How Judge Gilroy, who was a landlord, merchant, and farmer, ever attained the title of "Judge" we know not; but complimentary titles then, as now, were frequently bestowed. The Judge had been a member of the State Senate, and was often spoken of as a probable candidate for Congress; furthermore, he was a large, fine-looking, dignified gentleman—looked and talked like a judge—and hence probably received his title. When the Judge learned from the Squire that Mr. Adair thought of making his home in Salem, he seemed much pleased, and proffered to render him or any friend of the Squire's any assistance he could.

Adair soon found that Salem was the centre of a much larger trade than he had supposed; in fact, it was then one of the most important towns in Western Kentucky, and he at once determined to locate there

and try his fortune. He was not a man to idle away his time, and the following day he sought, through Judge Gilroy, an introduction to Amos Green, the only saddler in the town, to see what arrangement, if any, he could effect with him. He had previously learned that Green was an improvident man and a slovenly workman. After his introduction, Adair at once explained to Green the object of his visit ; that he was a saddler ; that he intended locating in Salem and opening a shop ; but, before taking any steps, he had thought it right to come and advise him of his intentions and hear what, if anything, he had to say on the subject.

Green was a tall, slim, bald-headed man, of about Adair's own age. After thanking Mr. Adair for doing what he said was "the fair thing," and making some further preliminary remarks, he, in his roundabout way, said :

"Well, I don't know. It 's sorter doubtful if there 's trade enough 'round here to keep up two shops. But I 'll tell you what it is ; I aint very well, am kinder out o' sorts ; owin', I think, to workin' too much at the bench. I need more exercise, and have sorter thought of goin' on a farm ; and, if you would like to buy me out, and go it on your own hook, maybe we could make a trade. Then, I 've got a-nuther scheme in my head. I 'll tell you what it is. There 's a right smart of yearlin' cattle 'round here and they 're all fat now, and the farmers don't want to keep 'em through the winter, and will sell 'em cheap—say three to four dollars a head for good-sized ones. Now, if you and me could make a trade for cash, or part cash and part truck, I 'd go inter this thing ; get

me a good flat boat, and float my yearlin's down the Mississip' and would sell 'em out 'long down the coast 'tween Natchez and New Orleans. And, maybe, you 'd like to jine me in the spec, for I know the business, and it 'll pay mighty big as sure as you are born."

Adair at once saw that Green was "ripe" for a trade, and proposed to take an inventory of his stock, and then talk with him further on the subject, to which Green at once assented, and introduced him to George Duncan, a journeyman saddler then in his employ, who, he said, would assist him in "listin' the stock." Adair, accordingly set to work at once ; and, as soon as the inventory was completed, made Green an offer, cash down, for the stock, tools, etc. Green, after shrugging his shoulders awhile, and characterizing the offer as "a monstrous low-down bid," accepted it. That afternoon the money was paid over, and Adair, having arranged with Duncan to remain with him, pulled off his coat and went to work with a more buoyant heart than he had ever done before, for he now had a spot he could call home,—and might he not hope that he could soon acquire a cottage, and have it adorned and made enchanting by the presence of a lovely woman as his wife ? Orders soon flowed in upon him ; and, to execute them as promptly as required, he and Duncan often worked until a late hour at night.

At that time, even to a much greater extent than is usual in country towns at the present day, mechanics rarely received pay for their work entirely in money ; it was, as a general rule, a little money and a good deal of "truck" ; and hence nearly every mechanic became more or less a trader and speculator. In this way Adair soon became the owner of quite a miscellaneous

collection of property, which he sold as fast as he could, usually taking what were termed "cash notes"; that is, notes, given in the course of trade, which were past due and bearing interest, and which could be sued upon at any time if payment were refused after being demanded. These "cash notes," owing to the great scarcity of silver, were in extensive use as a substitute for bank notes, of which there were none in circulation that commanded sufficient confidence to pass at par. A few years before, the Legislature of Kentucky had chartered forty-six independent banks, all of which had suspended, and notes of the "Bank of the Commonwealth," a State institution, were at thirty to forty per cent discount.

Adair was so plain and straightforward in all his transactions; so open and truthful, even when it apparently militated against himself; and, withal, so temperate and industrious, that he was soon looked upon as one of the rising men in the town and county. Moreover, he was soon recognized as a man of more than ordinary intelligence,—one who had read and travelled much. So conversant was he with the social and political history of the country, that few could cope with him in an argument, in which, however, he was usually loath to engage, although political excitement then ran high, and discussions, public and private, were the order of the day. His character was not, however, without what some considered as serious blemishes. He was not a member of any religious denomination and never had been. He had read the Bible much and attentively, as he would any other profound or useful book; but, while he was no scoffer—never doubted the existence of a God,—yet was he sceptical as regards

some of the dogmas of the Churches ; and, when questioned, never hesitated to express his opinions in a plain and forcible manner. Then, too, he was fond of music and dancing ; enjoyed witnessing a horse race, and did not object to a quiet and gentlemanly game of cards, nor to betting a moderate sum on a good hand. But these dissipations, although fearfully denounced by some, were so generally condoned, if not encouraged, by others, that it militated against him but little, if at all.

Adair was readily admitted into the so-called "best society." For, even at that day, and in such a primitive country town, there was a line of demarcation. The sooty blacksmith, the pegging cobbler, the stained tanner, and the small farmer, who owned no slaves, found some difficulty in crossing the line and cultivating social relations with lawyers, physicians, merchants, and the large farmers who owned slaves. This, however, was by no means impossible. A fair presence and demeanor, particularly if backed by sobriety, industry, and the ownership of a good horse and accoutrements, would enable one to cross the line.

Adair passed the first seven months of his residence in Salem hard at work ; his only recreation being at night, when he often spent an hour or more in reading, or in making, or receiving social visits in his apartment over his shop. On that blessed one day in seven, when all work was laid aside, he would generally mount his fine horse—Ben Simon, the same he rode when he first entered Salem—and go occasionally to the country Meeting-houses, but more frequently to the home of Squire Howard. The latter were to him times of refreshing, when he was strengthened for the labors and conflicts of life ; for the more he saw of Miss How-

ard, the more he found in her to admire and love, and it was with some difficulty he could await the day—which he now thought near at hand—when he could, with propriety, plainly tell her that his heart was hers, and ask her to be his wife. But how often clouds will intervene and dim the brightness of our sun, and glorious sunsets prove but harbingers of storms !

The month of April had now arrived and brought in its train its frequent showers, its "bursting buds and opening flowers." All nature seemed suddenly to have escaped from the icy embrace of winter. The birds, as they flitted from tree to tree, warbled or piped their same old songs, but sang them with more gladsome tones. The lowing kine were out in force prospecting for the early grass. And the negro plowmen, how jocund did they "drive their teams afield" and make the welkin ring with shout and song ! but, when they sang, however blithe the air might be, it always ended with a sad refrain.

It was at this hopeful season of the year that Joseph Adair was taken ill. He had for some time suffered from a pain in his chest, caused by too constant bending over his bench, and he had resolved to toil less steadily. There was first a shivering chill and then a burning fever ; his pulse ran riot and his wandering mind carried him back to his childhood's home, and he was soothed awhile by the tones of an old blind man ; then he called to Ben—the negro boy Ben, his companion for so many years—to come and help him lift the weight from off his chest ; then a vision bright appeared before his wondering eyes, and he could see the green pebble which she always wore around her neck ; and he spoke to the lovely visitant and said,

"Be not cast down; I will soon be well, and then—" but his words died away in murmurs. When the doctor came, and had looked at his tongue and felt his pulse, he turned to George Duncan, who watched by the bedside of his friend, and said: "He must be kept very quiet. You must have some one to assist you in nursing him, for he must be watched both day and night. Whom can you get?"

"Horace Benton will no doubt help me."

"You could get none better," replied the doctor, and continued: "I will give Mr. Adair this potion now. In two hours give him another, unless he is asleep, but on no account awaken him, for sleep will do him good; there is some danger of brain fever." Then adding that he would go by the Clerk's office and send Horace over, and cautioning Duncan to admit no one into the room unless necessary, Doctor White—a venerable man, with a most kindly and benignant face—left the room.

For a week or two, Joseph Adair's life seemed to hang in a wavering balance. During all this time Duncan and Benton nursed and cared for him as if he had been a brother. Many friends called and volunteered their services, but the nurses said, "No, not unless we break down, for we understand best what he requires and how to wait on him." Squire Howard, or one of his sons, called almost daily to see their sick friend, and had often to carry back reports that were distressing to every member of the family, and filled the heart of Miss Howard with a tearless and feverish anxiety. Mrs. Gilroy, the kind-hearted wife of the Judge, at whose hotel Adair had boarded since his arrival in Salem, was thoughtful and skilful in prepar-

ing for him such food as was recommended or permitted by Dr. White.

Adair's recovery was slow, and it was near the middle of May before he was able to appear in his shop. A few evenings later he was sitting on the pavement in front of his shop enjoying a cool, refreshing breeze, laden with the grateful odors of blooming spring. There was no one near, and he presently called to his friend Duncan to bring out a chair and sit near him, as he had something he wished to talk to him about. Duncan readily did as requested, and, when seated, Adair said: "George, I have been thinking it over, and have made up my mind that it would be best for me to quit work at the bench; I don't believe I could stand it much longer. Now what say you to taking charge of the shop? I will furnish all the materials; you to do the work, and we to divide the profits equally. I will guarantee that your share shall at least equal the wages you have been earning. The business to be carried on in our joint name. Now, what say you?"

"That you should determine to quit work at the bench," replied Duncan, "does not surprise me, but your liberal proposition does; and, thanking you heartily, I accept it; the firm name to be Adair & Duncan. But now, if I may ask, what do you think of doing? for I know that as soon as you are able to work you will not be contented to remain idle."

"You are right," responded Adair. "I must not remain idle longer than necessary. I have been thinking over the matter, and moderate exercise on horseback will, I think, build me up sooner than anything else. I understand Boyd wishes to give up his position

as Deputy Sheriff, and if I could get his place it would suit me very well, give me plenty of exercise on horseback, and enable me to use what money I can raise to good advantage."

"If Boyd intends to resign," said Duncan, "there is almost no doubt about your getting the position, for with Squire Howard and Judge Gilroy to back you—and they 'll do it certain—and with Horace Benton to plead for you if necessary, Mr. Hughes, the Sheriff, will certainly favor you. But, I must say, it 's a post I would n't care to fill; for, it 's my private opinion, if there are any writs to be served, or criminals to be arrested, in Jim Wilson's section, Hughes will be sure to scrouge such dangerous work on you."

"I am well aware," replied Adair, "that down about Hurricane Island and the Cave there are many desperadoes, and this, I admit, has made me ponder seriously over the danger to be incurred; but some officer must run the risk, and as well me as another. But what has become of our friend Benton? I have not seen him for a day or two."

"Oh, no telling," answered Duncan. "But I suppose he 's gone a-sparking; gone, perhaps, down to see old man Ritchie's daughter, for I 'm told he sits up to her, when he has a chance, 'like a sick kitten to a hot rock.'"

"Well, well!" said Adair, "I wish him well in his suit. He is the most unique genius I ever came across. He 's a wonderful fellow all round! has a wonderful brain, a wonderfully good heart, and is wonderfully lazy. It is a pity, I think, that he has his home in such a country town as this; here there is n't enough to stir him up—to arouse his pride or ambition. He

does his modicum of writing in the Clerk's office, and, when that is done, he seems content to loll around—take 'mental notes,' as he calls it, crack jokes, spin yarns, etc. He ought to be in some bustling, busy city; he might then rouse himself, and if so he would certainly make his mark. He is a natural-born orator, is something of a poet, musician, and artist; and the most perfect mimic and inimitable story-teller I ever knew. He would make a name and fortune on the stage. Should he marry, and get the right kind of a wife, she might, even if he remained here, stir him to exertion; otherwise, he will rust."

"He 's all you say," replied Duncan; "and I think it would be well for you to have a good talk with him. He 's crusty with most persons who undertake to lecture him—it 's about the only thing that puts him out of humor; but I really believe you have more influence with him than any one else."

The conversation of the two friends continued for some minutes longer regarding their partnership arrangement, when Adair, feeling fatigued, arose and went to his room.

A few minutes later, Duncan, who had remained seated, saw Horace Benton enter the Clerk's office, and concluded to go over and have a chat with him. Benton was then about four and twenty years of age. He was tall, slim, and slightly stoop-shouldered; had apparently too little energy to sit or stand erect. He had a fine suit of dark hair, and his features were well formed, yet, notwithstanding his inexhaustible humor, his face generally wore a sad and woe-begone expression.

When Duncan entered the office, he found Benton

seated at a long table covered with green baize ; his long legs stretched at full length under the table, on which he rested his elbows, while with both hands he supported his chin. Before him on the table were several scraps of paper, at which he was abstractedly gazing.

" Come in," said Benton, languidly, as soon as Duncan appeared at the door. " Notwithstanding I am, as usual, busily engaged in doing nothing—that is, with my hands—I can find time to swap an idea or two with you. But, first, how is Uncle Jo?" (for so he often spoke of Adair).

" Still improving," answered Duncan.

" Here," said Benton, pushing towards Duncan the scraps of paper which lay before him, " look at these !"

Duncan, on examination, found on each scrap a pen-and-ink sketch of Adair, and several of them striking likenesses. " Capital !" he presently exclaimed. " There is no mistaking for whom these were intended. And I want this one."

" You are welcome to it, my friend," said Benton, in a slow, sad, earnest tone. Then glancing around, as if to see that no one was in ear-shot, he, in despairing tones, added : " Fellow mortal ! I, even I, have my moments of deep, yea, desperate despondency." And so much of sadness was there in his tones and manner, that, well as Duncan knew him, he began to think there was really something serious the matter. Then, seeing from Duncan's face that he had almost pumped tears into his eyes, Benton quickly resumed : "A depression resulting, as such terribly trying attacks most generally do, not from inefficiency of the secretive functions and the consequent imperfect generation

of rich, life-sustaining blood. Nay ! nay ! ! the root of this terrible malady, which is slowly but surely sapping the foundations of this already attenuated and enfeebled frame, filling the vista of my life to come with visions dim and dire and dark, hath its origin in the flabby condition—of—my—*purse;* a condition, alas, which threatens to become chronic. And it was to win my thoughts from that harrowing vision of an empty purse, that I essayed to portray the striking features of our mutual friend ; intending, had his frail bark unmoored from the shores of time, and hoisted its white sails to cross the mysterious seas that separate us from the unknown shore, to have presented these soulless outlines to a few of his surviving friends, as a slight memento of our—of our——" But his emotion was apparently too great to admit of his saying more, and, throwing his arms around Duncan's neck, he fairly blubbered ; while Duncan, with moistened eyes, laughed as if his sides would burst. Never before had he known Benton to act the " serio-comico-tragico " part so well.

A few minutes later, Duncan stepped into the adjoining room for a glass of water, and hardly had he done so before he recognized the voice of old William Barlow—or Uncle Billy, as he was generally called,—a kind-hearted, honest, and jolly old soldier, who lived in the country a mile or two from town.

" Horace, my boy," said the old man, addressing Benton, " I owes you some office fees, an' I was a gwine ter pay you ter day, but, by-golly, I left my wallet at home, an' I haint got no rhino."

" Oh, never mind that, Uncle Billy," replied Benton ; " you can pay me the next time you are in town."

" Thankee, thankee, my boy," said the old man,

approaching close to Benton and speaking in a confidential tone ; " but, I tell you what it is, I must have a dram or two, before I starts home, ter warm up my old blood ; and, Horace, my honey, you must lend me two bits, an' I 'll pay you back next time I sees you."

" Uncle Billy," said Benton, placing his arm gently over the old man's shoulder, and speaking in the most dejected manner and tones, " my old friend, I am ashamed to confess it, but it is the truth—the painful truth—that I—am—strapped. I, too, have long wanted a dram ; and, oh, how much I have wanted it, only those who have suffered in the same way can tell ! But, Uncle Billy," he added, in a decided tone, " I am too proud,—too proud, sir, to ask credit at a bar."

The old man was so moved by Benton's apparent distress and the humiliation to which he had subjected him, in exposing his extreme poverty, that he exclaimed, " Thunder and Blixen ! say no more about it, my boy," rushed from the room, and soon borrowed from some other friend enough money to pay the fees due Benton and for the " drams " ; then, hurrying back to the Clerk's office, he half dragged Benton to the bar of the hotel and made him take two " drams " with him, which was one too many for Benton, and, as he afterwards admitted, served him right by causing him a severe headache.

CHAPTER VII.

Cave-in-Rock, and its Gang—Jim Wilson—Adair Appointed Deputy Sheriff—Benton, on Fishing and Hunting—Adair's Advice to Benton—Benton's Estimate of himself—Benton and Miss Ritchie—Warren Davidson—Adair's Confession to Benton—Death of William Adair and Joseph's Resolution—A Kind Invitation.

THE following day Horace Benton called to see his friend Adair, who, in the course of their conversation, informed him of the business arrangement he had made with Duncan, of his desire to obtain the office of Deputy Sheriff, and his reasons therefor.

"I think," said Benton, after listening attentively to all Adair said, "that you have acted wisely in determining to give up work at the bench; and you could not have a better man for a partner to carry on the business of the shop. Nor will there be any trouble, I think, in your getting the appointment of Deputy Sheriff; for Squire Howard can and will, I am almost sure, arrange that for you. But, Adair," he added, "have you seriously considered the dangerous nature of the office? For, I can assure you, it is dangerous —very!"

Benton then went on to speak of "Wilson's gang" around Cave-in-Rock, of their reputed crimes, etc.

But to him Adair made about the same replies he had made the day before to Duncan.

Before proceeding further, it may be well to refer more particularly to the Cave-in-Rock, and to the gang that made it so notorious. "On the Illinois side of the Ohio River," says the history of Kentucky from which we quote, "only a few feet beyond the jurisdiction of the State of Kentucky, is a cavern, in a rock or ledge of the mountain, a little above the water of the river when high, and close to the bank. It is about 200 feet long and 80 feet wide; its entrance 80 feet wide at the base, and 25 feet high. The floor was remarkable, being level through the whole length of the centre, the sides rising in stony grades, in the manner of seats in the pit of a theatre. Close scrutiny of the walls made it evident that the ancient inhabitants of a remote period had used the cave as their council-house. Upon the walls were many hieroglyphics, well executed,—among them representations of at least eight animals of a race now extinct, three of them resembling the elephant, the tails and tusks excepted. This cavern is connected with another more gloomy, immediately over it—united by an aperture about 14 feet wide, to ascend which was like passing up a chimney; while the mountain was yet far above. For more than sixty years this has been known to boatmen as Cave-in-Rock.

"Early in the present century, a man, named Wilson, brought his family to the cave, and fitted it as a dwelling and tavern—erecting on a sign-post at the water's edge these words, 'Wilson's Liquor Vault and House of Entertainment.' Its very novelty attracted the attention of boats descending the river, and the

crews generally landed for refreshments and amusement. Idle characters after a while gathered here, and it soon became infamous for its licentiousness and blasphemy. Wilson, out of such customers in their necessities, formed a band of robbers, and laid plans of the deepest villainy—no less than the murder of the entire crews of each boat that landed, and the forwarding of the boats and cargoes to New Orleans for sale, for cash, which was to be conveyed to the cave by land through Tennessee and Kentucky. Months elapsed before any serious suspicion was created, and other months before the vague suspicions grew into shape and definiteness. But as no return of shipments were reported, and not one of many honorable men entrusted with cargoes of produce came back to pay over the proceeds and tell the perils of the trip, it first came out that no tidings were received of any boat after it passed this point; and then that 'Wilson's gang' of about forty-five men, at the station at Hurricane Island, had arrested every boat which passed by the mouth of the cavern; and through business agents at New Orleans converted into specie the boats and cargoes obtained through wholesale murder and robbery. Some of the gang escaped as soon as they found public vengeance aroused against them; a few were taken prisoners; and the chief himself lost his life at the hands of one of his own men, who was tempted by the large reward offered for Wilson's head."

The foregoing historical account is, however, inaccurate in several particulars. The Cave, as is well known to every boatman on the lower Ohio River, is not above high-water mark, its entrance being often entirely submerged, and it could only have been used,

as indicated, when the water was low. The man Wilson, called the chief of the gang, never, it is believed, lived with his family in the Cave ; and it is certain that for many years before his death—the particulars of which we will set forth in due order—he lived on his farm on the Kentucky shore a few miles from the Cave, and near an important ferry across the Ohio River, where, it was reported, many an unfortunate traveller mysteriously disappeared. But no crime was ever traced to Wilson with sufficient clearness to cause his arrest and trial. That there were many murders and robberies about the Cave there was undoubted proof, and that Wilson was the chief of the gang was doubted by few of the citizens of Livingston County, in which he lived ; but the statement that a large reward was offered for his head is entirely erroneous.

But to return to the interview between Adair and his friend Benton. As soon as the latter had learned that Adair was prepared to encounter the dangers of the office of Deputy Sheriff, he—Benton—at once proposed to ride out and see Squire Howard on the subject, as the latter might not be in town for several days.

Adair thanked him, and added: "I wish you would. I would not trouble you about it, but I am not yet strong enough to ride out myself, and the sooner the matter is attended to the better."

"All right!" replied Benton, and, looking rather quizzically at his friend, continued: "And, as I am going out to the Squire's, can I deliver any other messages for you?"

"To the young ladies—yes," was the good-humored reply. "You may say to them, I hope soon to be strong enough to ride out and make them a visit ; and

that they must hold themselves in readiness to go a-fishing with you and me. What say you? Would n't you like it?"

"Certainly," was the prompt reply. "I 'm not much of a fisherman myself—am too lazy for that. It 's only an industrious and thoughtful man who thoroughly enjoys the quiet and repose he feels when fishing. The lazy man is aroused by the excitement of the chase—by the absorbing watchfulness and activity necessary when hunting; and, by his exertions, eases his conscience for past laziness. But to go a-fishing with a pretty girl, and watch the play of her countenance as she pulls out the little fish and makes the big scream! Oh, it 's glorious!"

This admission, by Benton, of his laziness, afforded Adair a good excuse, so he thought, for giving his friend a good talk, as Duncan had suggested. And he did talk to him plainly, earnestly, kindly; told him of the high estimate he placed on his ability to achieve distinction and make a fortune; and that he ought not to be content to drag along at the rate he was going, but should go to work earnestly and persistently.

Benton listened to him patiently and attentively, and then replied: "Adair, I thank you for all the kind things you have said about me, and for such frank and well-meant advice. But, my friend, you labor under several mistakes. I have weighed myself often and carefully, and you place too high an estimate on my abilities. I have some ambition to make a name,—little, however, to make money; but I have not the self-confidence—the brass—the cheek—to push my way in a crowd or among strangers. I have genius of a mild type, but no talent, and no business capacity. I

may here, where I know every man and have noted his peculiarities, give vent to my genius for provoking laughter and merriment, but in the busy marts of trade I would be considered as a clown or buffoon. Men might laugh at my jokes, but would never employ me to attend to their legal business. Besides, as I have said, I am lazy ; it 's constitutional ; I can't help it. I could, like a fat chicken cock, by a desperate flapping of the wings, manage to mount to a low limb, but it would be to roost securely. I could no more stand a sustained effort than the fat cock ; I could no more labor on steadily to attain a name or fortune in the distant and uncertain future than I could live on air." Then, suddenly assuming a serio-comic tone and manner, he went on : " Then there is another ' p'int ' that I don't mind mentioning to you, under the seal of secrecy. I—am—in—*love ;* most desperately bad off ; a downright distressing case, for the disease has struck in and no amount of sweatin' will bring it out."

" Oh," Adair laughingly answered, " there 's a sovereign remedy for that disease : get married ; it 's just the thing to stir you up."

" Just so—just so ! " responded Benton. " I 've thought of that remedy ; and I would n't mind taking a full dose of such sugar-coated pills—for they are said, you know, to make a fellow sleep, oh—so—so sweetly —but then, you see, there are several ' *slight* ' impediments. In the first place, I 'm afraid my wallet is too flabby to pay the doctor's bills ; and then the old folks don't want their ' dar'ter ' to catch the disease from me. And, sir," he continued, " I have a—*rival !* a strapping, big fellow with a heavy purse and fierce rolling eyes—looks as if he had been fed on raw meat

nearly all his life, and hints at a longing desire for an opportunity to inspect my innocent liver and lights; with which useful articles I cannot so safely dispense as I have done with my heart. And as this bothersome rival got the start of me, and was patted on the back by the old folks, he succeeded in wringing from the fair lady some sort of an admission or promise, which she now laments over, and talks of blasted hopes, resulting from filial obedience and the sacredness of promises. Oh, Moses McDuff! what is a fellow to do under such circumstances? Come, Adair, you are a cool, dispassionate mortal; can't you give me a cue or a grain of comfort?"

Adair could not help laughing at Benton's recital of his woes, but he was sufficiently acquainted with his suit for the hand of Miss Ritchie to know that he was, in his odd way, telling him of a matter which was causing the ardent lover serious uneasiness; his laughter, therefore, soon subsided, and he said: "Come, come, Benton! I do not think you have much cause for depression. A case like this must necessarily be left to the decision and management of the young lady. If she really prefers you to your rival, it is almost certain she will have her own way. Parents, now-a-days, rarely force their daughters to marry against their will. As for this fierce rival of yours, there is an old adage that 'a barking dog rarely bites.' If he tries to force a quarrel on you—which is not at all likely—you will know how to stand up to your rack. There is nothing a young lady so much admires as pluck in wooing and winning her, and they all abominate a braggadocio. It would, of course, make matters run much smoother if you could obtain the full and free consent of the

parents. On this point I have a suggestion to make. You have for some time been reading law, and could, I have no doubt, obtain a license to practise. Now, apply for that license as soon as possible ; then buy you a good horse and outfit, and attend the sessions of the Circuit Court in all the adjoining counties. Your experience in the office of the Clerk of the Circuit and County Court here, and your skill as a penman, fit you for drawing all legal documents quickly and accurately, and you will, I am convinced, get more business than you anticipate. If you are known as a practising lawyer, instead of a Deputy Clerk of the Court, it will be a feather in your cap with the old folks. In the meanwhile, tell the ' fair lady ' of your resolution, and, my word for it, she will manage the balance to your satisfaction."

" Well, to speak the sober truth," replied Benton, gravely, " I would, I am sure, have no difficulty in obtaining my license to practise law ; but, taking into account the expense of travelling the Circuit, and cost of horse, outfit, etc., I fear that the net gain from my practice would not equal what I am at present earning. But, I suppose, if I am ever to make a start, the sooner the better ; and the effect would, no doubt, as you say, be favorable on the old folks ; for, plainly, I believe that their main objection to me is that they fear I have not sufficient energy to make a good living for their daughter. As for my rival, I have no fears whatever of personal violence."

" I have," said Adair, " a fine young horse in my stable—you have seen him—the chestnut sorrel—which is at your service for a year ; and if he suits you, and you wish at any time to buy him, you can have him at

a valuation to be fixed by your brother, and on as long credit as you may desire. Moreover, should I obtain the office of Deputy Sheriff, I can, I doubt not, throw some business into your hands."

"That settles the matter!" said Benton, emphatically, "I will get my license as soon as possible, and see out of what kind of metal I am made! And, as I am to go out to see the Squire, suppose I ride the chestnut and give him a trial?"

"All right! I will have him ordered out and ready for you at any hour you wish to start."

"Let it be, then, at three o'clock; that will give me time to go out and return by supper, after which I will call over to see you and report progress."

At eight o'clock Adair was sitting alone in his room. He had been trying to read so long as the light of day enabled him to do so, but his mind would wander from the page before him, although it was Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad*, which, next to Shakespeare, was his favorite poetical work. But, now, although he sat at an open window facing the west, there was no longer light enough for him to see how to read, and he gave himself up wholly to reflection. First, about Benton's love and fears. Then, the question naturally arose in his mind, "What if some one should step between me and Laura? This long illness is doubly unfortunate, for it has disarranged all my plans; and, although delays are said to be dangerous, I must wait."

At that moment, there was a gentle tap at the door, and, without awaiting an invitation, Benton entered, and before taking a seat began.

"Well," he said, "the Squire thinks—is almost certain, in fact—that he can get the appointment for you,

and promised to try and see Mr. Hughes, the Sheriff, to-morrow. He, furthermore seemed glad to know that you intended giving up work at the bench ; and was much pleased at the idea of being of some service to you. I also delivered your message to his charming daughters, who told me to tell you that you must come out as soon as you could, and that they were certain a few days' stay in the country would do you much good. When I told them of your proposed fishing excursion, they readily assented ; and Mrs. Howard, who was present, up and told me of your having rescued Miss Laura from the creek last summer. That was well done on your part, Adair, and I wonder a little that I never heard of it before. But that 's your style : ' Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.' As for the sorrel, I am half in love with him already ; he carries his head and tail proudly, gets over the ground rapidly and easily, and never stumbles."

" I wish I felt strong enough," responded Adair, in an abstracted manner, as if he were communing with himself rather than addressing his companion—" strong enough to ride out. This long illness and confinement to the house is very irksome. But, Benton," he continued, rousing himself, " I must thank you for your services to-day ; and let us hope there is a brighter day in store for both of us, and that it is not very distant."

" Adair ! " and as he spoke Benton looked his friend full in the face, " since I had the talk with you this morning I have felt more like a *man* than ever before in my life. As I rode along, to and from the Squire's, I turned and twisted the matter in my mind in every possible way, and came to the conclusion that the course you suggested is the best for me to pursue. And now,

my friend, I would not be thought inquisitive, nor as prying into your secrets, but there is a matter pertaining to yourself and a certain young lady, about which I would like to speak."

"Then speak, and speak freely," replied Adair.

"During your illness," said Benton, "your mind repeatedly wandered, when your fever was high, and on several occasions you spoke of 'Laura.' Who this Laura was I never knew, nor should I mention the matter now, but since my visit to the Squire's and learning of your having rescued Miss Laura from drowning last summer; and considering, also, your acquaintance with the family before you came here, and the warm interest they all manifested in you during your illness, I cannot resist the conclusion that you, like myself, are —in—love! and—with—Miss Laura Howard! Stop!" he said, seeing that Adair was about to speak, "wait and hear me through, for then you can judge best what reply, if any, to make. I have known Miss Laura since she was a little girl; she is all she should be; beliked by old and young. I know of no young lady in this county who has received more attention from young gentlemen, and rumor says that several of them —and among them some very worthy fellows—have sued for her heart and hand, yet she has possessed the rare faculty of retaining their friendship after having declined their offers. Among her suitors there is one Warren Davidson; you, perhaps, never saw him, for he has been absent in the South and in New Orleans for nearly a year. He is now about twenty-four or twenty-five years old. His father, who owned a fine farm and some fifty to sixty negroes, lived down on the Ohio River. He died about two years ago, leaving

Warren, his only child, the richest man, I suppose, in this county. When a boy some seventeen or eighteen years of age, Warren attended a school near Squire Howard's farm, which was also attended by several of the Squire's children, Miss Laura among them ; and, it is said, Warren then fell desperately in love with her ; certain it is, he did, before leaving for the South, solicit her hand in marriage. What her answer was is not known, at least by me, but it was generally believed she had rejected him, or had put him off with an indefinite answer, and hence his trip and long absence. That she should have rejected him is to many a matter of surprise, for Warren is not only rich, but well educated, intelligent, kind-hearted, and decidedly good-looking. Now, this Warren Davidson has not only returned, but is now at Squire Howard's, where he arrived some minutes before I left ; and, I presume, is there for the purpose of renewing his suit. Now, I have thought it best to mention these matters, that you may take notice and govern yourself accordingly."

Adair, who had listened with almost breathless interest, trembled with emotion—which, in his weak state, it was impossible for him to suppress—as he replied : " Horace, my friend, I will speak to you plainly what I have never said to another. I have known, and I may almost say I have loved, Laura Howard from her early childhood. When I parted from her at Knoxville, Tenn., where her parents then lived, I was a boy of twelve and she a lisping child, but there was a tie which bound me to that little child which I can scarcely explain to myself, much less to another. Years afterwards, when my apprenticeship had ended, although I had far to journey, I returned to Knoxville, hoping to

see *that child* again. I was disappointed; was told that, some ten years before, Mr. Howard had moved to Kentucky. That was all I could learn until about a year ago I was told that Mr. Howard was living near this town; that brought me here. When I had seen the little child, now grown to what she is, my heart went out to her almost on the instant, and now *I love her* with all the ardor of which, I suppose, my nature is capable. But not *one* word of this have I ever breathed to her. I was too poor to marry; but I have, since my arrival here, labored hard with this end in view. Moreover, I have thought it but honorable and *right*, before declaring my love, to establish my character in this community, that the woman I sought for a wife might know what manner of man I was."

There was something so earnest, so impressive in the looks and tones of the speaker, that Benton was affected as he had rarely been before. Here, before him, was a man who loved deeply, passionately, but who had labored long, patiently, unwaveringly, to show himself worthy of the woman he loved before asking her to decide the most momentous question of his life. A man, who, in love as in business, was governed by a sense of duty, and hence mindful of the obligations due to others, however much these might conflict with his inclinations or interest. He — Adair — had come to Salem a stranger and poor; had courted no man's friendship or confidence, but, by diligently pursuing the even tenor of his way, had already won many friends, and was seemingly on the high road to fortune. The journey of his life had doubtless been a cold and cheerless one, and yet, just as he was coming out into the sunshine of prosperity, these troubles had come

upon him—his long and severe illness, and, now, a formidable rival for the hand of the woman he had loved with such singular constancy. His love had been a steady light, compared with which most men's passion was flickering and feeble. But the oil of hope and constancy, which had hitherto fed so pure a flame, would surely not become exhausted and the light go out!

"Adair, my friend," said Benton, after arousing himself from his reflections, "what you have said surprises me—surprises me because I had not thought it in man's nature to be so constant. And, in telling you what I did, if I have caused you unnecessary pain or uneasiness, I am sorry for it. But I have an abiding faith that one who has so long and steadily been guided by one bright star will not now, as the day seems dawning, lose his way nor find it blocked before him."

"I hope not," responded Adair, in a calm tone; and then, after a short pause, continued: "Look you, Horace! To you I have intrusted the one great secret of my life! guard it well. I must have time to think over this matter before determining what course to pursue."

And the two friends parted for the night.

The following morning, when Adair appeared in the shop, Duncan noticed that he was restless, perturbed, almost fretful; and in reply to his usual inquiry, "Well, how are you this morning?" received for answer, "Only so-so. I slept but little last night." Duncan then went across the street to the Post-Office, and soon returned with a letter for Adair, which he handed him. The latter was standing when he opened the letter, and after glancing at it for a moment dropped

it upon the floor, uttered a low moan, staggered back, and would have fallen before Duncan could reach him, but for a high bench against which he leaned for support. It was some moments—during which he repeatedly passed his hand across his forehead—before Adair turned his eyes, dry and almost glaring, to his friend, and, while the muscles of his throat twitched convulsively, said, in a hollow voice : " My brother is dead. Assist me to my room."

This Duncan did, and, after seeing Adair seated by an open window, turned to go, saying, " Tap on the floor if you want me," and left the room, without uttering a word of the great sympathy he felt for his sorely afflicted friend ; judging that at such a moment he had best be left alone to compose himself—perhaps to pray. And Duncan was right ! for the wrung heart, however unused to prayer, often frames some cry for help or mercy and finds relief.

On returning to his shop, Duncan saw Benton on the opposite side of the street and beckoned him to come over. When the two were together, Duncan told about the sad news Adair had just received. Benton was silent for some moments, and then said : " My God ! troubles never come singly." Duncan supposed he referred to Adair's recent illness, followed by this news of his brother's death, but Benton had in mind the conversation he had had with his friend the day before.

That evening Benton called to see Adair, and found him calm and composed, but very pale ; and, looking rather than speaking his sympathy, he took the seat pointed out by his friend. For some moments not a word was spoken. Then Adair said :

" Horace, I had a talk with you last evening about

another matter, and I then wanted time for reflection. The news I have this morning received changes all my plans. My brother has left a widow and three small children—all daughters; and as they are left with but little, and have no one else to care for them, their maintenance devolves upon me. I will bring them here as soon as I can. This puts my marrying out of the question, even if Miss Howard would accept me, which I very much doubt. Therefore, you will please let the matter drop, as if forgotten, for it will ever be a mournful memory to me."

"But, Adair," said Benton, very earnestly, "are you not making a sad mistake? Suppose Miss Howard loves you, and that she only requires the assurance of your love for her to be willing to wait for years, should she not have the option of so deciding? Are you not withholding from her a declaration upon which may depend not only your own happiness for life but hers also?"

"I have thought of these things," was the calm but firm reply, "but I have no assurance I will ever be in a position to offer her a home, without which it would be wrong for me to ask or expect her to wait, and thus, possibly, miss securing a heart and home more worthy of her than I could ever offer. If she loves me, it would only add to her misery to be made aware of my own. If she does not love me, but is as kind and considerate as I believe her to be, it would pain her to know of my unhappiness, for that she esteems me as a friend I am well assured. My own load may be a heavy one, but it is bound on my shoulders and I will carry it without complaining."

"But," said Benton, very feelingly, "this load was

unexpectedly placed upon you. May it not be unexpectedly removed, or prove much lighter than you suppose? In other words, may not fortune smile upon you and enable you to support a wife and also maintain your brother's widow and children?"

"If so," was the steady reply, "and it is not then *too late*, I will hasten to make known my desire and receive her answer."

Benton saw that his friend's mind was made up, and that further efforts to change it would be unavailing; nor could he but admire the firmness and unselfishness of the man; and, after a few passing remarks, he left the room.

But scarcely had Benton reached the street before he met Squire Howard, who at once informed him that he had secured the office of Deputy Sheriff for Adair, and proposed to go at once and so inform him.

"No, Squire," said Benton, "before going to see him, walk with me, please, to the Clerk's office. I wish to speak with you about Mr. Adair."

When the two were in the office and seated alone, "Our friend is in great distress," said Benton. "He has to-day heard of the death of a brother of his, in Hopkinsville, who leaves a widow and three small children—all girls—and as they are in poor circumstances and have no one else to aid them, their maintenance devolves on him. He has resolved to go to Hopkinsville, as soon as he is able to travel, and bring the widow and children here, where he can better care for and protect them. It may, therefore, be that he will be delayed for some time in entering upon his duties as Deputy Sheriff. If so, can this difficulty be overcome?"

"No difficulty about that!" promptly replied the Squire. "I can, I am sure, get Mr. Boyd to retain his place until Joseph is ready to take it. But I am really sorry to hear this sad news about the death of Joseph's brother. Such a blow, coming upon him before he has recovered from his serious spell, will go hard with him. That he should take upon himself the burden of supporting his brother's family is no more than I should have expected of such a man. You, Horace, are not perhaps aware of it, but I first met Joseph on the road, in the mountains of North Carolina, when I was moving West from South Carolina. He was then a lad some ten or twelve years of age, and for several months following I saw a good deal of him and liked him greatly. Besides, on one occasion he rescued one of my little ones from great danger at the peril of his own life: it was Laura when she was our minikin. This, of course, attached us all the more strongly to him, and we were all much pleased when he came to make his home among us. But come, let us go over and see him, for among other matters I have a message for him from my wife, who wants me to take him out home with me, for she thinks she can doctor him so that he will improve faster than if he remains in this dusty town."

"Just the thing!" exclaimed Benton, who secretly thought that the society of Miss Laura would do Adair good—cheer him up, and perhaps be the means of winning him from his resolution not to tell her of his love; for, notwithstanding the weighty reasons assigned for his resolution, he, Benton, could but think his friend was making a great mistake. He feared, however, Adair would dread the ordeal through which he

would have to pass, and decline the kind invitation on the plea that he did not feel strong enough to ride so far. He therefore determined to forestall, if he could, this plea, and, he added: "Yes, I 'm sure the visit would do him good. But, between us, Squire, I 'm afraid he 's not quite strong enough to ride so far, and on this account he may decline going; but he could, no doubt, stand being driven out in a buggy; and Judge Gilroy has a light one which I am sure I can get for a few hours. I will go by the hotel and see; and, if I can get it, I will take Adair's horse, Ben Simon, and drive him out and return with the buggy. But this suggestion, Squire, had better come from you."

"All right, Horace," replied the Squire, "and I thank you for the suggestion, for take him home I must, if possible."

The two then walked out, and were soon at the hotel, where they found Judge Gilroy, and, when Benton had explained what he wanted, the Judge at once proffered the loan of the buggy.

CHAPTER VIII.

Adair's Mental Conflicts—Mrs. Gilroy and her Daughters—Benton Drives, with Adair, to Squire Howard's—Ben Bolton, the Blacksmith—Jefferson Brantley, the Showman—Miss Emily Wilmot—The Secret, and Ada Howard as Judge.

"AH, Joseph, I was on my way to see you," said Squire Howard, as he entered Adair's room, "to tell you I had arranged that matter about the deputy shrievalty, to the satisfaction of all parties, when Horace met me and told me of the sad news you have received. I was sorry to hear it, not only on your account, but to learn that your brother has left a wife and three small children to mourn his loss. If," continued the Squire, speaking rather hurriedly, as if to relieve Adair from the necessity of making any reply—"yes, if your duty towards them should occasion any delay in your entering upon the duties of your office, I can easily induce Mr. Boyd to continue at his post until you are ready to relieve him. But, now, I have a message for you from my wife. She told me to tell you that you must come out home with me; that, if she had you out there, she could doctor you up so that you would get well much faster than if you remained

in this dusty town. She says that a glass of warm milk, just from the cow, taken every morning before breakfast, is exactly what you require to strengthen and build you up. We will all be glad to have you with us, and for you to remain as long as you can. Now, will you go with me?"

For some moments Adair remained silent. He was debating the matter in his mind, as Benton had supposed he would, but at last he looked up and said: "I thank you, Squire, for your sympathy, and for this invitation. And I 'm sure Mrs. Howard's doctoring and the new milk would do me good; for, now that I am reminded of the remedy, I distinctly remember that, when I was quite a small and rather delicate boy, an old blind man—a grand-uncle of mine—often made me rise early in order to get a glass of warm new milk, which he made me drink, and which he considered the most efficacious of all remedies for diseases of the chest and lungs. But, Squire, I must ask you to excuse me to Mrs. Howard, for—well—I do not feel strong enough to ride so far at present. And as soon as I am well enough to travel, I must leave for Hopkinsville. I will try and call and see you all as soon after my return as possible. And, Squire, let me also thank you for arranging the matter with the Sheriff; and you will please say to Mr. Boyd that I will hasten all I can to relieve him."

"I will see Boyd and attend to that," replied the Squire. But," he continued, "as it is necessary for you to go to Hopkinsville, so much the more reason why you should hasten to get well; and, as you are not strong enough to ride, I propose to get Judge Gilroy's buggy. And, Horace," he added, turning to

and addressing that young gentleman, who was slowly stretching his long legs, "you need jolting up. Can't you drive Joseph out? You can drive out and easily return with the buggy before sundown. The drive on such a delightful evening will do you both good."

"Certainly!" answered Benton, "I would be glad to take such a drive." Then, observing that Adair hesitated as to what reply he should make to the Squire, he turned to him and said almost pleadingly, "I think you can stand the trip, and that you ought to go."

The Squire was one of the most unsuspecting and least observant of men. It had never occurred to him that there might, could, would, or should be an affair of the heart between Joseph Adair and one of his daughters. He only knew that Joseph, whom he liked, had been very ill; that his wife had requested him to bring Joseph home with him; that he believed the visit would be both pleasant and beneficial to the invalid; and, lastly, as Joseph was a man with whom he delighted to converse, he was anxious to have him go with him.

Adair really felt that he could stand the drive,—that it would refresh him,—and that a few days in the country among the forest trees and green fields would do him good. Moreover, he was at a loss for a valid excuse for declining so kind an invitation. But should he, he asked himself, subject himself to such an ordeal as that he would have to pass through if thrown into the society of her whom he loved so well, but from whom all knowledge of that fact must be scrupulously withheld? Yet might there not be a "silver lining" to the cloud which hung so darkly over him, and a

"divinity" that "shaped" the circumstances by which he was surrounded? But, no! Divinity would point only to the polar star of Duty, and in that direction would the "silver lining" soonest be found. "And yet—and yet," he said to himself, "I am resolved! And this ordeal may, perchance, purify me the sooner! And—then—again—I have no good excuse!" Then rousing himself from his mental conflict he said to the Squire: "Well, if you can get the buggy, I will go. And, Benton," he added, turning to the latter, "you had better get my horse, Ben Simon, and drive him."

"All right!" exclaimed the Squire. "Come with me, Horace, and we will see about the buggy; and then, as I am afoot, I will start for home, where I hope to find you both when I arrive."

Half an hour later, Benton drove to the shop door, where Adair was awaiting him. The latter, before being assisted by Duncan to his seat in the buggy, stepped up to his "old comrade," as he often called his horse, Ben Simon; and really the noble animal seemed to recognize at once the stroke and voice of his master, for he quickly turned his head and gently rubbed it against Adair's shoulder.

As they were about driving off, Mrs. Gilroy and two of her lovely daughters, who were just blooming into womanhood, appeared at the windows of the hotel, nearly opposite, and waved a salutation to Adair, while a younger daughter, Carrie, a bright little maiden of about ten years of age, came bounding across the street to shake hands with her friend and say: "How glad ma, and all of us are to see you out again!" Adair patted the cheek of the dear little lass, and told her to

tell her mother that he was going out into the country to remain a few days. "And, pet," he added, "when I return, I will try and bring you some beautiful flowers."

"I am a very green hand," said Benton, as soon as they had started, "at driving a buggy; for, as you know, such vehicles are scarce in this 'wooden' country. But tell me," he continued, "does this slight jolting pain you in any way?"

"I am very comfortable—in no pain whatever," answered Adair. "In fact, this sense of motion, after my long confinement, and this pleasant breeze refresh me."

Ben Bolton, the herculean blacksmith, left his fiery forge as he saw Adair coming past, and came out into the street to speak to him.

"By Jingo! Jo," Bolton exclaimed, as he shook hands with Adair, "I 'm downright glad to see you out ag'in; and, from what I 've hearn, the tire on your wheels come mi'ty nigh slippin' off. But I hope the doctor has made a good job of it, and fixed you all right for a long journey."

"Thank you, Bolton; thank you," replied Adair. "The doctor has fastened my tire and greased my wheels, and I hope soon to be in good running order again. But, come, tell me how is the little wife and the eleven children."

"Oh, she 's as spry as a cricket. But I tells her—you know, Jo, I allers was sorter fond o' teasin' the little woman—so I tells her ef our sparks goes on a-growin' as fast as they has done, they 'll soon be a consumin' fire. But the little woman she only cherups, an' says she has to hold the hot end of the poker.

And, I reckon, Jo, that 's about so, and ef she can hold on I 've no right to complain. Besides, them little tow-headed gals o' mine are sometimes a mi'ty sight o' comfort to me and the little woman."

As they drove on over the hill Adair heard Benton muttering something about an "old grizzly bear" and a "human heart," which he supposed referred in some way to Ben Bolton.

After passing beyond the town they met a rather good-looking young man, mounted on a very fine horse, and dressed in the height of fashion.

"Do you know that gentleman?" asked Adair.

"Oh," replied Benton, "that is Jefferson Brantley, the showman. He has recently given two of his exhibitions here—it was while you were sick. He is a wonderful fellow; eats fire; pours molten lead into his mouth; runs a sword blade, an inch wide, down his throat a foot to a foot and a half; crams raw cotton—almost enough to stuff a pillow—into his mouth and throat, where he spins and weaves it into beautiful ribbons of various colors, which he draws from his mouth and presents in the most charming manner to the ladies, and consequently is considered by them as 'some pun'kins.' Where he came from no one seems to know. Why he remains here is said to be due to the charms of Miss Emily Wilmot, whom he saw at one of his shows, and to whom he has since obtained an introduction. And I suppose, from the way he is dressed up, that he is returning from a visit made her. He is further said to be a 'bang-up' hand at 'seven-up,' and, in fact, at any game of cards. It is half suspected that he is a professional gambler, and only makes his show business a convenient disguise for travelling

through country towns and fleecing the innocents. It is pretty certain that, since his arrival here, he has 'skinned' several of our 'b'hoys' rather skilfully."

Miss Emily Wilmot, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer who lived near Squire Howard, was one of the belles of the county. She was tall and graceful, with regular Grecian features, dark-blue eyes that could sparkle when they liked, and a luxuriant growth of pure auburn hair. Adair, who knew her but slightly, had often heard of her as a former schoolmate and warm personal friend of Miss Laura Howard. He had considered her as a young lady of rather more than ordinary culture and intelligence; hence this news surprised and pained him, for he felt assured, from what Benton had told him, that Brantley was a captivating and dangerous man. But they were now in the country, and his mind was soon attracted by his surroundings.

All around, by the roadside, in forest and unplowed field, were innumerable wild flowers. It, too, was corn-planting time, and the newly-plowed fields sent forth an agreeable exhalation. Great flocks of glistening blackbirds and keen-eyed crows hovered around to scratch up if they could not pick up corn enough. The sight of these hungry, chattering, pillaging pests reminded Adair of an old song he had learned in his early boyhood, one verse of which he recited:

"Says the blackbird to the crow,
What makes the farmer hate us so?
For ever since old Adam was born,
It 's been our trade to pick up corn."

Then the conversation drifted to the days of his boyhood, and Adair spoke of the old Quaker brothers, of his father, of his brother in North Carolina, whom he had not seen for so—so many years, and of the brother who had just died, to whom he was more attached than to any living relative, due, perhaps, to their companionship in recent years.

But they were now near the residence of Squire Howard. Benton was anxious to witness the meeting between Miss Howard and Adair, and hoped to detect something in Miss Howard's looks or manner that would furnish him evidence of her love for his friend.

They had driven so slowly that Squire Howard, arrived home before them, had informed his wife and daughters that Joseph was on his way out, and of the fresh misfortune which had befallen him in the loss of his brother, in reference to whom he gave them all the information he had received from Horace Benton. After alighting at the front gate, a negro boy took charge of the horse, and Adair, leaning on the arm of Benton, approached the house. The Squire, who met them at the gate, walked by Adair's side to render further assistance if required. Mrs. Howard and her two daughters came forward to meet the invalid, and in turn took him by the hand. But Mrs. Howard was the only one to speak. "Joseph," she said, in her kind, motherly tone, "we have heard of your loss of a brother, and we are very sorry; but we are all very glad to have *you* with us again. Now," she continued, when they had reached the porch, "would you like to lie down—for a bed is in readiness for you,—or will you take this large arm-chair, and rest here for a while?"

Adair seated himself in the chair, and spoke not

until he looked up to thank some one who had handed him a glass of water, when his eyes met those of Miss Howard. Her pale, sad face yet had a tinge of gladness in it, and never were sympathy and tenderness more clearly shown in bonny blue eyes or in movement and gesture. Benton, unobserved, watched her closely, and thought he had never seen her look so beautiful.

As Benton drove back to town that evening he was puzzled. He was an adept in the study of men's faces, for it had been almost a "hobby" with him; but a woman's face, if not a sealed book, was a much more difficult one for him—for any one to read. Miss Howard's words, looks, and manner during the hour which he remained at the house were the very personification of kindness and thoughtful consideration, but whether the master passion was there was more than he could determine. He had, however, learned that Warren Davidson's visit had been a short one, and that he had returned home, from which he inferred that if Warren's suit had been renewed, he had been unsuccessful.

That night when Miss Howard and her sister Ada were in their room, the latter, after a prolonged silence, said:

"There is something, sister, I want you to tell me. I don't often ask you to tell me any of your secrets, and I 'm sure you might tell me this!"

"Why, Ada," smilingly replied her sister, "I don't know that I have ever kept from you any secret of *my own!* There may be some secrets, as you call them, which were intrusted to me by others, and hence not mine to dispose of. But what is it you wish to know?"

"Well, I 'll tell you plump out. I know you love Mr. Adair better than you do Warren Davidson. You

never told me so in plain words, but I can see it. When Mr. Adair was sick, you walked about here, five miles from town, as if you were afraid of making a noise and disturbing him. And I have lately seen marks of tears in your eyes and on your pillow."

"Oh, come, Ada," pleaded her sister, "don't talk that way, please. And you said you were going to 'plump out' what you had to ask."

"Well, then, to plump it out, was n't I right?"

"Right about what? About my loving Mr. Adair better than Warren? You have just said you *knew* that, then why ask me the question? This much, I 'm sure of—Warren loves me and Mr. Adair may not."

"Now, that is just the point," said the excited Ada, "I was coming to, if you had let me plump it out in my own way. I know Warren has loved you ever since he was a boy, and that he has often told you so; and, before he went South, that he asked you to be his wife. And I know very well that you have always liked him, for you have often told me and others so. Then, I can't understand why you have kept the poor fellow so long in suspense; for, by his coming here so soon after his return home, he shows very plainly that he has n't given you up yet, and still hopes to win you. If I had been at home during his visit, I 'm sure I could have told, by his tell-tale face, whether you gave him any encouragement. And I have been almost dying, since I came home this evening, to ask you all about it."

"Then, the secret you wish to know," was the amused reply, "is, if Warren, when here, repeated the old story, and what answer I gave him."

"That 's exactly it, sister darling!" exclaimed the

impatient Ada, giving her sister a kiss. "We 've come to the point at last. And please—that 's a good sister—do tell me *all* about it ; what he said, and what you told him, and how he took it, and all about it. Now, please do, for I want to know *so* much."

But when did any one ever know a young lady, when questioned, to be in a hurry to tell a secret about an affair of her own heart which another young lady—even though a sister—was "almost dying" to hear? How they can and do play with it, like a skilful angler with a fish which he has securely hooked, knowing that the sport will be over as soon as the struggling captive is safely landed on the shore.

Miss Howard could but smile at the nervous excitement of her beautiful young sister, as she replied: "But, Ada dear, excuse me! What do you think I should have done under the circumstances? For, to tell you the truth, I am at times perplexed and fear I may have deceived myself."

"Oh, but I don't know all the circumstances!" exclaimed Ada. "That 's just what I *want* to know, and then I will tell you what I think you ought to do—give you lots of sage advice!"

"But, suppose," continued Miss Howard, good-humoredly, "your sage advice should happen to conflict with my inclinations, or convictions of duty, what then?"

"Oh, then," replied Ada, "of course you would and should have your own way, even if it did make me cry a little. But, really, sister darling," she continued in a most appealing manner, "I do feel so much interest in this matter, I 'm sure you will tell me all about it!"

"Certainly, darling," was the soothing reply, "but

I am anxious to know how you would have the affair terminate—which of the gentlemen you favor, and why ? ''

'' Oh, that 's what *you* want to know, is it ? '' said the flattered young sister, who proceeded to take a seat and poke out her dainty footsy-tootsies (a word that ought to be in the dictionary, if it is not) from under her snow-white night-gown ; then, folding her little hands across her lap and assuming the gravity of a judge, she proceeded to sum up the case :

'' Well, let me see ! '' she said, '' let me hold the scales fairly ! Warren, he 's the youngest, and the richest, and the best-looking, and loves you ever so hard. That 's a heap on his side—no, his scale. Then, he 's nice, accommodating, and liberal ; but most young gentlemen are that way when they 've got plenty of money, like he has. They do say he 's a little extravagant, and occasionally gets on a bit of a spree ; but I expect most of them do that if the truth were known. But, then, if you had Warren tied to your apron-string, you could break him of that, for you could always make him do whatever you wanted. —Now for the other side — the other scale,'' she continued, after taking a fresh supply of judicial gravity. '' Mr. Adair—I 'd always have to call him Mr. Just fancy me calling him Joseph ! But, to begin again. Mr. Adair is most too *old ;* yet that may not be such an objection to *you* as it might be to *me*, since I 'm only a bud yet and you are a full-blown rose. And right there you had better stick a pin ! for roses will fade and shed their leaves in time, and then, alas ! alas ! Then he, Mr. Adair, is not distressingly handsome ; some people might call him ugly, but it 's

rather an attractive sort of ugliness which some romantic young ladies might even be proud of. And, he is only a mechanic, but we won't count that, for our father was one before he took to surveying. And, he is poor ; but, I dare say, he 'll be as rich, if not richer, some of these days, than Warren Davidson, Esq., for everybody says he is an industrious and money-making man. Then he 's the most intelligent man around here, so pa says, and he knows more about such things than any man I know. But, oh my ! if you should ever try to tie him—Mr. Joseph Adair—to your apron-strings, I 'm afraid he would tear loose ! But some young ladies that I know would rather follow than lead. And, I 'll be bound he 's close with his money, but while that might not suit *me*, it might suit some others. And——"

"But listen !" exclaimed the elder sister as she sprang into bed, "the clock is striking eleven, and remember we must be up early in the morning, so we must adjourn the case until to-morrow, or some other time."

"Oh my !" sighed Ada, "I got so engaged,—no, that 's not the word, for I never was engaged and don't see much chance."

"Oh, don't you fret," retorted her sister, "he 'll come along some of these days."

"Who ?"

"Your fate."

"Well, I wish he 'd come along and let me catch a glimpse of his form and face. I 'm sure he 'd be better-looking than——"

"'To bed, to bed, says sleepy-head,'" interposed Miss Howard.

"No, 'tarry awhile, says slow,'" replied Ada. "And, let me see! Where was I? Oh, yes, I was saying I was so much interested in holding the scales and weighing the two gentlemen that I managed to do all the talking and let you escape without telling me a word about it all. But you will tell me, won't you, sister?"

"Yes, darling; but not to-night. You did sum up the case—'weigh the gentlemen'—very fairly as far as you went. But you did not finish—you reserved your decision, and I must await that; so come to bed and you shall hear all in due time."

And as it was really getting late, and as Ada, now that her excitement had in a measure subsided, was getting a little sleepy, into the bed she crept and was soon sound asleep. Not so, however, Miss Howard. She had been interested and amused by her sister's lively manners and conversation. Besides, she felt more hopeful than for a long while, and now that all was quiet she wanted to *think*. For an hour or more she did think—and as seriously as she could,—but then her eyelids grew heavy, and giving Ada's hand a gentle pressure, and possibly imagining it some one else's hand, she closed her eyes, and we will suppose she too slept and had pleasant dreams.

CHAPTER IX.

About "A Home"—Col. Andrew Lovell and Wife—Family Prayer—In the Garden—Love as a Disease—Adair Returns to Town—Laura's and Ada's Stroll—Pleasing Sights and Sounds, but Sad Hearts.

DURING the week or more that Adair remained with his friends, the Howards, he rose early every morning and drank his glass of warm, new milk, and during the day took gentle exercise in the fields, forests, and along the country roads. His horse, Ben Simon, had been brought out from town, and he daily took short rides, in some of which he was accompanied by Miss Howard on her horse Jerry. But he gave her no intimation of the great love which was gradually transforming what might have been a fountain of light into a gloomy dungeon. The nearest approach to this was when, reference having been made to his recent illness, he said: "The prospect, before that, was looking bright to me; I had begun thinking of a little cottage which I—for so many years a wanderer—could call *my home;* but I never dreamed it was to be occupied by the widow and children of my brother."

This speech sounded to Miss Howard much like the knell of all her hopes, nevertheless she gave utterance only to the sentiments of her unselfish nature, when she replied: "It is sad to have our hopes frustrated,

but I am sure you will find much tranquil happiness in the performance of so sacred a duty as caring for the widow and fatherless children."

And Adair looked into her face and wondered if she had ever dreamed that his prospective cottage was designed for *her* home, and if its loss would cost her a pang. But this was verging upon forbidden ground, and he quickly changed the topic, and spoke of Miss Wilmot.

"Emily Wilmot," replied Miss Howard, "is one of my warmest and most intimate friends. You have perhaps heard of visits recently made her by a comparative stranger, a Mr. Brantley. Do you know him?"

"I do not," answered Adair, "but I have been told that he is something of a magician—a sleight-of-hand showman; and that, by some, it is thought his vocation is only assumed as a convenient disguise to his real business—that of a gambler. But, be this as it may, your friend should be on her guard."

"Emily is a prudent and sensible girl," replied Miss Howard, "but when next I see her, I will, unless you object, tell her of what I have heard in reference to Mr. Brantley, without, however, mentioning from what source I have received the reports."

"It would perhaps be well for you to do so," he replied.

"Well, here we are at home again," she remarked, as they rode up to the gate, "and I hope your ride has not fatigued you much."

"No, thank you," he replied; "and what between repose, country air, and pleasant company, I have so far recovered that I must leave to-morrow, and return to town to make preparations for my trip to Hopkinsville."

"I am sorry," she said, "to know you will leave us so soon, for we will all miss you; but others have now more claims upon you."

Her closing words—"others have now more claims upon you"—rung in Joseph Adair's memory for many a day.

That evening, when nearly all of the family, with Joseph Adair, were seated on the front porch, a gentleman and a lady were seen coming up the road on horseback, and were soon recognized by Miss Howard, who sprang to her feet, exclaiming, "It is brother Andrew and sister Harriet!" There was then a general movement to the front gate to welcome the new-comers.

Adair had often heard of Colonel Andrew Lovell, who had married Squire Howard's eldest daughter, Harriet, but had never before seen him; his farm being some twelve to fourteen miles from Salem, and only a few miles from the notorious Jim Wilson's. Colonel Lovell had gallantly led his regiment of Kentuckians throughout the war against the British and Indians in the Northwest in 1812–14, and was widely known as a daring soldier and as a prudent and skilful officer. Adair was therefore somewhat surprised to find the gallant Colonel a rather small and delicate-looking man with mild gray eyes, and long, thin, brownish hair, rapidly turning gray, although he was then only about forty years of age.

The meeting between Mrs. Lovell and Adair was a joyous one. She had heard of his having settled in Salem, but was not expecting to meet him. She was now the mother of four children, but as handsome, lively, and cheerful as she had ever been. When

introduced to Mr. Adair, she fairly sprang forward and exclaimed : "What ! Joseph Adair ? Yes, I see it is ! and, for once, I am going to demand a kiss for *auld lang syne*" ; which she, of course, received, and which, so far from displeasing her husband, caused him to grasp more warmly the hand of the man who evidently stood so high in his wife's favor.

That evening was a memorable one to Adair. He had to give a sketch of his life to Mrs. Lovell ; to talk over their adventures on the road and after their arrival in Knoxville ; and to hear from her the story of her first acquaintance with Colonel Lovell, just after the close of the war, of her marriage, their nice farm, lovely children, etc.

Adair soon found Colonel Lovell to be an exceedingly quiet and modest man, but that he could talk well when occasion required. His words were few, but clear, pointed, and earnest ; and there ran through all a marked vein of charity, as if the injunction, "Judge not, that ye be not judged," was ever present in his mind. It was said that at one time he was a wild, reckless, and somewhat dissipated young man, and that he carried these characteristics with him into the army, but was soon known as a rigid disciplinarian, yet greatly honored and beloved by those under his command ; for there was none braver, and he uncomplainingly shared in all the dangers, hardships, and privations of a common soldier.

"Well, Andrew," said Squire Howard in the course of the conversation, "have you still escaped all dangers and annoyances from Wilson's gang ? And is your neighborhood improving any ?"

"I have had no cause to complain," the Colonel

replied, "but some for rejoicing. Several of my neighbors of bad repute have recently aided myself and others in erecting a good Meeting-house and School-house at the Big Spring. From such seed I expect a good crop."

When the hour for retiring had about arrived, Adair was somewhat surprised to see a small table set out, and two lighted candles, a Bible, and a hymn-book placed upon it. Ada whispered to him, "We always have family prayers when brother Andrew comes to see us." The Colonel at once approached the table, and opening the Bible read a chapter in a slow, clear, and impressive manner. Then, closing the Bible, he opened the hymn-book, read the first two lines of a familiar hymn, and turning to Miss Laura, indicated by a gesture of the head that she was expected to raise the tune. She promptly did so, and all present, excepting Squire Howard, joined in the singing. Mrs. Howard and each of her daughters had good voices, but that of Miss Laura's was far superior to the others. Hers was a soft, well modulated soprano of considerable compass, the higher notes reached without apparent effort and rendered with remarkable clearness, but the most exquisite melody was in her lower, plaintive notes. The singing ended, all knelt down. The prayer was short, simple, appropriate, and when the Colonel arose deep solemnity was apparent on every face.

After a few parting words and kindly "good-nights" were spoken, all repaired to bed, but not all to sleep. There was something in the scene Joseph Adair had just witnessed; in the words that had been read; in the lingering strains of the old familiar air—"Days of Absence"—to which the hymn had been sung; and in the Colonel's simple but impressive

prayer, that awakened in his mind a train of reflections such as rarely occupied his busy brain. And then that voice of such wonderful sweetness would unbidden obtrude itself among more serious thoughts. And why had he not sooner found out that she could sing so sweetly? He might then have often prevailed upon her to sing for him, but now he was going away, and there would be many "days of absence." And then—oh, the craving, hungering, thirsting of our natures!—he wondered if she could have selected that old air, as one that gave expression to her *own* thoughts at the moment. "But such fancies," he said to himself, "must not be indulged in, for has she not herself said that 'others have now more claims' upon me?"

The following morning at breakfast, Adair mentioned his purpose of returning to town to make preparations for his trip to Hopkinsville. He was urged, both by the Squire and his wife, to remain a few days longer, on the plea that he was yet scarcely strong enough to bear fatigue; but Adair promised to be cautious, and said he "must make the effort."

"I have learned," said Colonel Lovell, "that you will soon enter upon the duties of Deputy Sheriff, and this may sometimes bring you into my neighborhood; and, if so, you must not only come and see us, but make our house your 'headquarters'—your 'base of supplies.' [He could not entirely rid himself of some of his military phrases, although he had tried to do so.] And," he continued, "if you should at any time have any unpleasant duties to perform amongst the so-called 'Wilson gang,' you had, perhaps, better come by and see me, and I may be able to render you some service."

Mrs. Lovell also united in the Colonel's invitation; and, proud as she was of her little hero-husband, she would, but for a dissenting gesture from him, have told of some of his methods of managing those pariahs. The fact was, that while the Colonel was known among them as a soldier, and one of unquestioned bravery, he was honored as well as feared. Besides, he had, in his quiet and unassuming way, aided the families of some of "the gang," when their natural protectors had abandoned them or been driven from their homes to escape officers of the law.

Adair thanked the Colonel and his wife most heartily for their invitation, and said he would certainly accept their hospitality whenever he could do so. And thus began a friendship between these two men, Colonel Andrew Lovell and Joseph Adair, which lasted as long as they lived.

Soon after breakfast, Adair approached Miss Howard and said: "Miss Laura, you have in your garden many beautiful flowers. Will you not give me a few to take with me as a present to my little friend, Carrie Gilroy?"

"Certainly!" she answered. "But you must go with me and select such as you would like; and I will clip and pack them for you in a small basket, which you can carry on your arm."

Adair had never visited the garden, but had often observed the flowers when passing through the yard. The yards of farm-houses—then, as now—were seldom ornamented with shrubs and flowers, for these would soon have been destroyed by the chickens and other domestic fowls. Such flowers as were cultivated were usually found along the borders of the walks in the

garden where vegetables were grown. Adair was surprised to find so great a variety in the garden. There were roses, pinks, lilies, violets, jonquils, larkspurs, touch-me-nots, sweet-Williams, prince's-feathers, marigolds, morning-glories, and some others the names of which Adair did not know. Among the latter was a small flower somewhat resembling the violet, which attracted his attention. "Those are very beautiful," he said, pointing to the bed where they grew, "I never saw such before. What is their name?"

"Oh," replied Miss Laura, plucking and handing him a few of the most beautiful ones, "these are pansies; accept these for yourself."

At that moment they were joined by Ada, to whom Adair turned and said, "Are these pansies not very beautiful?"

"Yes," and with a most bewitching gravity she continued, "but I don't call them *pansies;* I like their common name, heart's-ease, best."

"I never saw the flower before," replied Adair, "and it was your sister here who told me its name. But if 'heart's-ease' be its common name, I will know it in future only by that name; and I will preserve these and test their efficacy."

"Oh," said Ada, "you don't mean to say there is anything the matter with your heart, do you? You never were in love, were you?"

"Certainly!" replied Adair, with an effort at jocularity. "And the attack was so very severe that I have not entirely recovered from it yet."

"Then," said Ada, with mock compassion, "why did n't you apply to the young lady to doctor you? She could have cured you."

"Oh," answered Adair, with rather more seriousness in his tone than he intended, "she had *another* patient similarly afflicted, who applied for her services before I thought it advisable to do so, and he required all her skill and attention."

"Then," said Ada, "you should have applied to some other fair charmer for relief."

"Nay—nay!" responded Adair, "I don't think I could have explained my case to another, or that another could have understood it; and, therefore, I have preferred to trust to the slow curative processes of nature. And," he added, "have you never been afflicted in the same way?"

"Me!" exclaimed Ada, as if surprised. But with a show of conscientiousness she continued: "Well, several times I have felt *some* of what I supposed were the symptoms, but it never proved to be a genuine case. At least I never went into a decline, nor lost sleep, nor even my appetite."

"Ah," said Adair, and although he smiled there was the ghost of a sigh in his tones,—"Ah, you 'll have it badly some of these days; and the best wish I can make you is that you may obtain speedy relief, for a lingering case is terrible."

"Why, Mr. Adair, you really appear to have made a specialty of this disease," said Miss Laura, who felt she must say something to hide her increasing embarrassment; for she could not divest herself of the impression that it was to *her* he had possibly referred in his remark, "that another had applied for *her* services," and "required all *her* attentions."

Adair looked at her earnestly for a moment before he replied. Then in a casual way he said: "Oh, I

would not have you think I have confined my attention exclusively to my own case — which I have never regarded as incurable,—but have often observed its manifestations in others. And especially of late," he added, thinking of Benton, "since a friend of mine told me he had taken the disease, and that it had affected him in a very singular manner."

"How was that ?" asked impulsive Ada.

"Oh !" laughingly answered Adair, "he said it had affected him somewhat as the measles sometimes do ; that is, as he expressed it, it had 'struck in,' and hence was all the more dangerous."

"Oh, poor fellow," exclaimed Ada. "I am so sorry for him ! I did n't know it ever affected anybody in that way. I wonder if new milk every morning would n't do him good ?" And away she bounded to avoid the reproof she expected from her sister's eyes, leaving Adair and Miss Laura—who had now gathered as many flowers as were required—to return together to the house. On their way he made some remark about the weather, but she was thinking about another remark of his—that he "had never regarded his case as incurable."

An hour later Adair had bid good-by to all, had mounted Ben Simon, and was slowly riding towards Salem. The conversation in the garden recurred to him, but he supposed both of the ladies would regard it entirely in the light of a piece of pleasantry. On the whole, he was disposed to congratulate himself on his firmness, and that he had been able to pass through the entire ordeal so well. Time and again the thought of the sacrifice he was making arose in his mind and made him wince, but never shook his purpose. On

his arrival in town, he gave his horse in charge of the hostler of the hotel, and went in search of his little friend, Carrie Gilroy, whom he soon found, and presented her with the flowers, of which he knew her to be passionately fond. In return he received from her a hearty kiss. This grave, sedate man possessed the soul-born faculty of making himself loved by children. He then hastened across to his shop, where he found his partner, Duncan, hard at work, and in fine spirits, having just secured the services of a good journeyman saddler, named Samuel Miller, to assist him through with the press of work he had on hand.

After Adair's departure from Squire Howard's, the ladies went about their household and other duties as usual ; but when the sun was nearly down, Ada rose from her sewing and approaching her sister Laura,— "Come," she said, "come, let us take a walk ; I 'm tired sewing." And putting on their sun-bonnets out the two went to take a short ramble in the wood-pasture and gather some wild flowers.

Ada soon observed that her sister's face wore a troubled expression ; she guessed the cause and sought to administer such comfort as she could. "Sister," she said in soft, earnest tones, "don't be cast down ! I 'm sure all will come out right, for I 'm sure he loves you."

"Who loves me ? " was the quick and slightly petulant question.

"Don't be vexed with me, sister," Ada pleaded. "I can see you are in trouble about something, and I have only guessed at the cause ; and perhaps I am wrong about it, but I thought you were thinking of Mr. Adair."

"I am not vexed with you, Ada, and forgive me if I

spoke petulantly. And I was thinking about him; and I am troubled. You know well that I have loved him—loved him as I never have and never can love another. But I have deceived myself—he has not deceived me. I hoped,—I thought he—loved—me! But I was mistaken."

"Sister," said Ada, "he one day said to me that little children were the best detectives; that as a compensation for their helplessness they were endowed with perceptive faculties so exquisitely keen and sensitive that they could, almost at a glance, tell the loving heart, however rough its exterior, from the cold and unsympathetic. I never heard nor thought of such a thing before, but I believe it—is—true! Now, I am little more than a child, and my 'perceptive faculties,' as he calls them, have not, I hope, been blunted much; and I have watched him, and I am sure he loves you."

"Then why should he, during this visit, have treated me with much more reserve than formerly, as if he feared I might be misled into supposing that he loved me? No, Ada, you are mistaken, as I have been."

"But, sister," interposed the sympathetic Ada, "you know papa says he is a very sensible and considerate man; and such men, I suppose, do not rush into love and matrimony like younger and rasher men. Besides, I 'll be bound, if he loves you—as I am still sure he does—that he has some good reason for remaining silent, of which you may not have thought."

"I have thought," replied Laura, "of several possible reasons. You remember you asked him, when in the garden, why he had not 'applied to the young lady for a cure.' His reply was that 'another had applied

before him,' and that 'all *her* attentions were required' by that other. I thought, at the moment, that possibly he aimed the remark at Warren Davidson and myself."

"I do expect he did!" exclaimed Ada. "Somebody may have told him you and Warren are engaged, for I have no doubt some people think so, and this may explain the whole matter."

"But you now know," Laura replied, "I am not and never was engaged to Warren. I do not and never did love him, but I have ever had a very warm regard for him, and the unhappiness I have unintentionally caused him has, as he well knows, been a source of much trouble to me, and now brings an added misery in its train."

"Oh, sister," replied Ada, "of course you must feel sorry for Warren, but I don't think his nature is so deep and constant as is that of Mr. Adair, who, I really believe, was in earnest when he said he would not seek relief from any other, but would 'trust to the slow process of nature' to cure him. He will, of course, find out some of these days, that you are not engaged to Warren, and then he will feel free to speak."

"Yes," responded Laura, "if—he—desires—to do so; but I do not, as I said before, believe he will have any such desire. And, for this reason, let us say no more about him; and in future let this subject be avoided."

"Oh, but my dear sister," pleaded Ada, "let me say one thing more! You know Mr. Adair has recently lost a brother whom he doubtless loved very much; and that he has to take care of the widow and little children. Perhaps he thinks himself unable to main-

tain a wife also ; and if so, would it not be wrong for him to marry ? ''

'' Ada,'' exclaimed Laura—and there was pride in her mien and voice—'' you have mistaken me ! It is not *marriage* but *love* that I crave. I honor Mr. Adair for what he intends doing for his brother's widow and children ; and I would not, if I could, deprive them of the full measure of his care and protection. And he too mistakes me if he supposes that I would not be content to wait, if only assured of his love. For wait I could and would, with a quiet, contented spirit, hoping and praying that in the future, however distant, I could claim as *my own* the *one gem* that can alone satisfy my heart. But, oh, to be without hope is to blast and wither the fruit of life ! ''

Ada had never before heard her sister speak in such a manner. There was alternatively pride, compassion, submission, overwhelming love, and hopelessness in her looks and tones. Ada was surprised, astonished, alarmed ; she tried to speak but could not, whilst great tears-drops rolled down her cheeks ; seeing which, her sister caught her in her arms, kissed her, and said : '' Forgive me, darling, but—I forgot myself ! Now I am calm ; and, as you have seen how weak and foolish I can be, let us be careful in future to avoid this subject.''

They walked on and gathered a few wild flowers. From a hill-top they watched the setting sun, and the clouds of purple and gold that lay motionless in the western sky. Cawing crows flew overhead, slowly flapping their wings as if returning to their nests wearied by a hard day's work. There was the twice repeated call of '' Bob White—Bob White '' that came

from the fence beside the wheat field, followed by the rapid whirr of wings as another partridge responded to the call. From over by the barn-yard were heard the mournful notes of the turtle dove. Blue jays were impatiently flying from tree to tree, looking for some oak with a thick, bushy top, in which to find a secure roost for the on-coming night. Nimble squirrels were seen here and there, now bounding, now creeping along towards their home in some hollow tree. A timid rabbit bounded past and disappeared beneath a pile of brush. Out on the road were the lowing cows, returning from the creek bottoms where the tender cane and richest grass were to be found, to the lot to see their little ones, and to give up their store of rich, creamy milk. The woods, the fields, the earth, the sky, were full of pleasing sights and sounds, but none of these received more than a passing glance or momentary thought from the two sisters. It seemed as if a thick mist had crept around them and shut out all save the echoing and re-echoing of the words that had been spoken, and glimmering visions of what "might have been."

CHAPTER X.

Adair and his Sister-in-Law—Viney, the Cook, and her Story—Benton Gives in "His Experience"—He Makes "An Offering" of Himself—The "Case" Adjourned — Brantley Tells his Story to Adair—Henry Rudolph Suspected—Adair as Brantley's Friend—Brantley Leaves Salem.

A FEW weeks after the events narrated in the last chapter, Adair's sister-in-law and her children were comfortably domiciled in a two-story brick residence which stood on the north side of the street, and near the centre of Salem. The kitchen, also of brick, was a detached one-story building in the rear of the dwelling, and was presided over by Viney, a negro woman whom Adair had hired as a cook.

Mrs. Adair—her Christian name was Sarah, but she had always been called Sally—was now about twenty-six years old, but she looked somewhat older. Her hair had at one time been of a light chestnut color, but now had a faded appearance, and in certain lights looked to be almost gray, though really not so. She was rather above medium height and very slim, her nose slightly aquiline, and her lips thin and almost colorless. She had, in early womanhood, been considered attractive rather than beautiful, but was now

somewhat faded from prolonged ill-health and depression occasioned by her recent bereavement. She was quiet and unassuming in her manners, and her voice, which was usually low and soft, would have been rather musical but that it approached too nearly to the plaintive and complaining. She was really attached to her "brother Joseph," as she called Joseph Adair, and was solicitous that she and her children should be as light a burden on him as possible; but her children required, as she thought, so much of her time and attention that much was left, in the management of household affairs, to Viney, the cook. The eldest daughter, Sada, aged eight, and the second, Jenny, aged six, were slim, delicate, fretful children; but the youngest, Anna, aged three, was a rosy, round-faced, chubby chit, and was from the start her uncle's favorite.

Adair still retained his sleeping-room over the shop of Adair & Duncan, but instead of dining at the hotel, he now took his meals with his sister; and so pleased was he with Viney's cooking that he soon came to consider her as an invaluable servant. The truth is, she did her best to please her "Mahs Jo," for, as she expressed it, she was "tired of bein' knock'd 'round frum pillar to post," and wanted him to buy her. That she had been so knocked about was due to the fact that she had belonged to minors, whose guardian—as was the almost invariable rule in such cases—hired out at public auction, on the first Monday in January of each year, the slaves belonging to the estate. It thus happened that Viney had been hired out annually for ten years. But it was now understood that she was to be sold, the following January, in order to wind up the estate, and hence she was looking around to find some

kind master, and try to get him to buy her. She had mentioned the matter to her "Mahs Jo," who had said he would think about it. She was now about thirty years old, and was what a trader would have called a "likely woman," but she was very near-sighted—an unusual thing among negroes—and always wore spectacles, which gave her an older and graver appearance than most of her race at her age. When asked about her husband, she hesitated for some moments, and appeared to be adjusting her spectacles, but was in reality wiping her eyes and collecting her thoughts. As soon as she could rid herself of a choking sensation, she told her little story somewhat disjointedly. Its substance was that, about twelve years before, Mingo and she had "took up togeder" as husband and wife; that Mingo had belonged to Mr. Penn Wilson, the son of Mr. Jim Wilson; that Mr. Penn had, some time before, been accused of killing a man over in Illinois near the Cave, in consequence of which he left home and went down South, where he was taken sick and died; that Mr. Jim Wilson was at times a cruel master to his slaves, and his son Penn, knowing this, had, before he went away, let his sister, Miss Catherine, have Mingo as a kind of body servant; that Mr. Penn was a young man of violent temper, which often got him into trouble, but was much attached to Mingo, who had at one time rescued him from drowning, and consequently he always treated Mingo well; and that Miss Catherine was a kind young lady, and that it was a pleasure to Mingo to do everything he could for her.

"An', Mahs Jo," said Viney, in conclusion, "I 've had two chiluns, but de good Lord took 'em bofe. An', Mahs Jo, Mingo 's a mi'ty handy man, an' I 's

mi'ty fear'd me an' him 'll never get a'gether ag'in ; fur I reckon he 'll hev ter be sol', an I 's drefful 'feard will be tuck away down Souf."

"I will do what I can, Viney, for you and Mingo," said Mr. Adair.

"Thankee, Mahs Jo, thankee ! I knows yer will do all yer can even fur poor culler'd folks," said Viney as she curtsied and withdrew.

Adair had, as soon as possible after his return from Hopkinsville, entered upon the discharge of his duties as Deputy Sheriff. Horace Benton had also by this time obtained his license to practise law, and had attended a session of the Court in an adjoining county. He was now at home, and Adair wanted to have a talk with him and learn what success he had met with ; so, on returning to town one evening after a long ride in the country, he rode by the Clerk's office, where Benton had his office and assisted his brother Robartus when not professionally engaged. Adair found his friend and invited him to go home with him and take supper. Benton readily accepted the invitation, for he had heard of Viney's fame as a cook, and he desired an introduction to his friend's sister-in-law.

The supper was a good but not an unusual one. There were good coffee and rich, cold milk, cold boiled ham and broiled chicken, various vegetables, excellent egg-bread and hot waffles with indentations made by the irons just large enough to hold a sufficient quantity of fresh, sweet butter, and an abundant supply of pure maple molasses. Conversation was not carried on very briskly at the table, for both men were hungry and ate heartily. Benton found Mrs. Adair affable and polite, while she could but be interested in the oddity and

quaintness of her guest's conversation, which would peep out on nearly all occasions.

After supper, and while Mrs. Adair was engaged in putting her children to bed, the two gentlemen seated themselves on the front steps. The first question by Adair was as to Benton's success at the law. The latter soon "gave in his experience," as he termed it.

"And I am satisfied," he concluded, "that the question of success or failure rests mainly with myself. If I don't succeed it will be because I don't work hard enough to deserve it. You know my constitutional laziness: *that*, I am striving—but I fear in only a feeble way—to overcome. But," he continued, after a short pause, "that *other* matter is causing me much uneasiness. To be plain about it, I am now convinced that Miss Ella Ritchie, before she was aware of my love for her, did entertain a warmer affection for Walter Gowan than I supposed. But, it is certain, she is now really alarmed—is, in fact, afraid of the man; and so, I half suspect, are her father and mother. It appears Gowan very recently formally demanded Miss Ella's hand in marriage, and, being kindly but firmly refused, flew into a violent rage, and swore that, certain promises having been made him, the matter would now admit of no 'backing out'; that he did not intend to be thwarted; that have her he should and would, and that all hell could not prevent him. The presumption is," Benton added, "that the man was under the maddening influence of liquor, or he would never have acted and spoken thus; for he is, as you have doubtless heard, a well educated man, of an old and distinguished family, and a nephew of one of the most prominent statesmen of the United States. I cannot think that

any man in his posiiton would, when sober, attempt such a thing as the forcible abduction of a young lady, for it would be a dangerous game,—one of which Judge Lynch might take cognizance. But, that Gowan is a reckless and headstrong man, there is no doubt, and there is no telling what such a man, when inflamed by liquor, may not attempt. Now, what think you?"

"Well, upon my word," answered Adair, "this does surprise me! There appears to be but three courses open: first, Miss Ritchie and her friends should be on their guard—prepared for any emergency,—and the young lady should herself be armed with a dagger to defend herself in the last resort; or she might leave home for a time—visit, say, some of her friends; but, should Gowan find out where she had gone, he is, I fear, devil enough to follow her. The last, and to my mind, decidedly the best plan, is for you, Horace, to marry her as soon as possible, and thus place her under your protection and beyond his reach."

"As to the last course," replied Benton, "I am, as you know, in no condition to maintain a wife, otherwise, I should not only be willing but delighted to accept the charge at once. I have been thinking of explaining my fears to Miss Ella and her parents, and of suggesting, yea, even urging that, under the circumstances, my early union with the daughter would not only be warranted but advisable."

"I would certainly do so!" said Adair. "They can but excuse if they do not approve an offer made under such circumstances. And you will, at least, have the satisfaction of feeling that you have done your duty. That Mr. Ritchie can and will assist you, until such time as your profession will maintain you and your

wife, I have no doubt. But even if you knew he would not do so, you should not let it deter you, for you have friends who can and will assist you if necessary."

"My dear Adair," responded Benton, "I am glad to know that you approve of my making an 'offering' of myself, and for your words of encouragement. But, are you aware of the fact that, in advising me to rush into matrimony and trust to others to help me if necessary, you are going counter to a law you lately laid down for your own guidance, but which I hope you have found good reason to repeal?"

"My law," replied Adair, "is certainly not like those of the Medes and Persians, irrepealable, but so far I have seen no reason to change it, and have not done so. Your case and mine are certainly not analogous. If I thought that Miss Howard's safety or happiness depended upon me, I would to-morrow go to her and offer her my hand and heart. Moreover, a fresh reason has presented itself to make me adhere to my resolution. I have told you of my father; that he is old and feeble and poor; and that he has a family of children, by his second wife, growing up around him. The news of my brother William's death was a sad blow to him. I now have in my pocket a letter from him in which he speaks of his great anxiety to see me and the widow and children of his lost son. I fear if he does not come, before another winter sets in, he may never be able to come; and so I have written him to come at once, and to bring with him his youngest son, Daniel, a boy now some fourteen years old, whom I wish to have remain with me, and for whose education I will provide. Daniel is a handsome and sprightly boy, and it will be a pleasure to me to have him with

me. So, you see, Benton, I will be a man of family anyhow, and have plenty to engage my time, attention, and affections."

Benton well knew that his friend's closing remark, which was made in a slightly jocular tone, was really an effort to cover up and hide a heavy heart, and he determined to cheer him up a little if he could.

"Well, well," he said musingly, "you do 'bang Bobtail' [a celebrated race-horse]. You have 'gone and did and done it again!' But I reckon it 'll all come right in the long run. All I can say is, if you don't, some of these days, make a fortune and get the wife you want, it won't be because you don't deserve both. But," he added, "I must now be going, and will go in and bid your sister good-evening. I have some writing to do to-night. And to-morrow, if my courage does n't ooze out, as did that of Bob Acres, I will make that proposition to 'the powers that be,' for this tintinnabulation on the diaphragm of my heart is rapidly getting my nervous system out of order."

A few days later the two friends met again, when Benton hastened to inform Adair of the news.

"Well, I did it!" he exclaimed. "That is, I went to do it, but *she* had flown. However,

> "No rude hand hath won
> The young bird from her nest away.

I was, under the seal of secrecy, informed of her whereabouts, and can only say I am satisfied she will be secure from any molestation. I told the old folks of the fears I had entertained, and of my plan for their daughter's security and happiness. They thanked me

for my 'thoughtful consideration,' but added that, in the absence of their daughter, the decision of the case must be indefinitely postponed. And, furthermore, as the present visit of their daughter would afford her an excellent opportunity—such, in fact, as she had long desired—to pursue certain branches of her education, hitherto somewhat neglected, they would regret exceedingly to have the current of her thoughts—already perturbed by recent unhappy events—further disturbed by the proposition I had laid before them. They would not, however, object, with this restriction, to my corresponding with their daughter; they, furthermore, promising, on her return, to inform her of my 'honorable and flattering proposal'; and that, after 'due deliberation' on her part—which they doubted not she would exercise in future,—they would cheerfully abide by any decision she, their daughter, might arrive at. I, of course, may not have quoted their exact words, but have sought, in my feeble manner, to indicate the solemn impressions made on my mind by their judicial and, possibly, judicious decision. So, you see, my friend," he went on without any apparent distress at the turn affairs had taken, "I had—but, of course, with much reluctance—to 'knock under,' and adjourn the case until some session of the Court when all the parties in interest can be present, and the result of my courtship be finally decided."

"I do not doubt," Adair humorously replied, "of your success at the bar of *that* Court, or of any Court in which you take so deep an interest in the decision to be rendered."

"Why, man alive!" exclaimed Benton, "I hope never to have another case—however varied my prac-

tice or my *practices* may be—in which I take so deep an interest as in this; for a few such would be the death of me. But," he continued, "have you seen Brantley to-day? I met him this morning and he said he wanted to see you."

"No," Adair answered, "I have not seen him. I left town early this morning and have just returned. I will look him up."

Jefferson Brantley was genial and cordial in his manners, liberal in the use of his money, and constant in his efforts to promote all kinds of sports and pastimes; hence had obtained some notoriety and a large circle of acquaintances; and many, both old and young, would have been sorry to see him leave. He was ready to bet—to gamble if you will—on any and everything in order, as he expressed it, "to have a little excitement and fun"; and horse-racing, foot-racing, jumping, wrestling, cock-fighting, pitching quoits, crack-lieu, and a variety of games with cards were then in vogue. Brantley was not above resorting to certain little tricks in order to win, or have "the joke on the other fellow," but these were no worse than those his opponents resorted to. There were some who still considered him as a mere gambler, and either avoided him or watched him suspiciously. This he knew, but, instead of being offended by it, admitted that, considering his introduction into the town, and the manner of his life, he had no right to complain. But, while so genial and good-natured, it was soon found out that he could be aroused—and terribly aroused; and had any man called him a "black-leg," there would have been, as Benton once expressed it, "a desperate fight, or a desperate foot-race."

Adair did occasionally play at cards, and was, on the whole, considered a successful player. He had thus met Brantley at what was considered a social game. He, Adair, was, moreover, very fond of the game of chess, and was really a good player; and as but few persons in the town understood the game, and none of those a match for him, he soon found in Brantley "a foeman worthy of his steel." In this way the two men became somewhat intimate, the more so as Adair gradually came to entertain a much more favorable opinion of the showman than he had in the beginning.

After his supper, as Adair was walking down to his shop, he met Brantley, who at once told him he had been looking for him, and asked if he had leisure to grant him half an hour's conversation, to which Adair replied in the affirmative; and, taking chairs from the shop, they seated themselves on the pavement where they could readily observe any one approaching and prevent being overheard.

Brantley was the first to speak and said: "I desire to leave here soon; and, before going away, there are some personal matters I wish to speak to you about. One to you in your official capacity, and others as to a gentleman with whom I am willing to intrust some of my secrets. Have I your permission to speak freely—you yourself to be the judge of how much of what I have to say shall be regarded as confidential?"

"Certainly," answered Adair.

"I will make my story," Brantley resumed, "as short as I well can to make it plain. My parents died when I was quite young, and I went to live with an uncle, who was a widower with several small children of his own. He was not an unkind man to me, but

was careless and indifferent—let me run about and do pretty much as I pleased ; and, as he lived in a town, I, of course, picked up a bad sort of an education. Afterwards I was sent away to school and stuck it out for nearly two years, when I got so tired and sick of it that I ran away. Perhaps I should n't have run away but I was ambitious, like many boys, to be a showman ; and, an opportunity offering, I joined a circus company. That was when I was about sixteen years old. Since then I have had many ups and downs, have travelled much, seen much, and, if not the worst side of life, certainly many hollow shams, false faces, and showy spangles. But I was never guilty of any crime, was never charged with a crime, and was never in jail. I am now twenty-six years old ; a showman and sportsman such as you know me ; no better, no worse !

" The first exhibition," he continued, " that I gave in this town, I saw in the audience a young lady whose face and form pleased me as none other ever did before. I sought and obtained an introduction to her ; have since visited her at her home, and my admiration for her has ripened into love. You doubtless know it is Miss Emily Wilmot to whom I refer. I have told her who and what I am—just what I have now told you, only more in detail. I have told her of my love and have proposed marriage. She has not rejected me —has in fact given me some encouragement ; but, like a sensible woman, says she must know more about me before she can give me a definite answer. To this I have not objected, nor do I object. The question is, how can I go about proving that I am not, and never was, a married man, and am no worse than I have admitted myself to be ? for that is, I suppose, about

the extent of the information desired. It appears that Miss Wilmot has a warm friend in Miss Howard, to whom you are well and favorably known; and, talking the matter over with Miss Wilmot, she suggested to me that, as her father was old and infirm, and her brothers, who are farmers, but little accustomed to writing, you, a disinterested party, would perhaps, give us your assistance in the matter. I will add that she could not have suggested any one more acceptable to myself. Are you willing to oblige Miss Wilmot and myself in this matter?"

"I am," Adair promptly answered. "But what means of obtaining information do you propose to furnish me?"

"I have here," Brantley answered, taking from his pocket a paper, "giving you the name and address of my uncle, of whom I have spoken, and of the principal of the school from which I ran away; also the names of three other gentlemen, well known in their respective towns, who have known me since I was grown. I would suggest that to my uncle and the schoolmaster you should write direct. To the others you can write direct or to any official in their town—the postmaster, sheriff or clerk of the county court—and request them to see the gentlemen, whose names I have given you, and obtain replies to such questions regarding me as you may choose to ask. I would, however, request," he added, in a jocular manner, "you to explain to the parties that you desire the information because of my having proposed marriage, etc., so that they may not suspect me of having gotten into some kind of devilment."

"All right!" responded Adair. "And, do you wish to see a draft of the letters I am to write?"

"No, I don't care to see it," Brantley answered. "But it would, perhaps, be well for you to send a copy of it to Miss Wilmot; or, better still, for you to call and talk the matter over with her."

"I will do so," replied Adair.

"Then," Brantley resumed, "I come to the next matter. You know that recently I have sported a little with your townsmen. Well, on the whole, I was yesterday a little ahead; that is, after paying my expenses I had rather more money than when I arrived here. Nearly all I have won has come out of the pockets of a few young gentlemen who form a kind of clique, one or two of whom are as cross as a sore-headed bear, and have vowed to get even with me in some way. They have heard that I thought of leaving here, and, no doubt, supposing I would never return, one of them —and I am almost certain I know which one—robbed me last night of nearly every dollar I had. I am, as I have said, almost certain I know by whom I was robbed; how I was robbed is quite clear. As it was quite warm last night, I opened my window when going to bed. A certain man was passing at the time and heard me open the window, for I observed him, dark as it was, stop and turn as if attracted by the noise. My bedroom is, as you know, on the ground floor, and the window on the west side—the one I opened—is not more than five feet from the ground on the outside. The thoughtful thief, without attempting to enter the window, used a long pole or rod, to which was no doubt attached a line and hook, and, in this way, fished my pantaloons, which contained my money, out of the window; and, after rifling my pockets, left my pantaloons on the window sill. I have this morn-

ing met the man who heard me open my window, and he was so unusually cordial and polite that, if I had had any doubts before of his guilt, I should at once have ceased to doubt. I did not, however, give him the slightest indication that I suspected him; nor, until now, have I mentioned my loss to any one. Unless you think it advisable for you to know the suspected man, I would not mention his name for several reasons. My evidence against him is not positive, and I must find out more. He occupies, too, a high social position—his relatives being among the richest and most respectable in this county—and to accuse him without positive proof would be to bring a nest of hornets about my head, which, as you can understand, I am just now anxious to avoid. I want to leave here as soon as possible, to be absent until you have had ample time to get replies to the letters you will write, when I will return and, if all goes well, will then get married. I have mentioned the robbery to you because it is your duty to trace up criminals. I will only point out one way in which *my man* may be found. Here is a paper" (handing the document to Adair) "which contains a description, as nearly as I can remember, of the bank notes and coin lost. You will observe there are three rare gold coins—one a Spanish, one a Peruvian, and the other a Bolivian, and each of them has a small hole near the rim. They were sometimes used by me in my sleight-of-hand exhibitions, and I happen to have a memorandum of their dates and some private marks upon them. I would like for you to keep a sharp look-out, during my absence, for these special coins. You are almost sure to come across or hear of some one of them, for but few persons know their

value, and will be likely to exhibit them and learn their value before receiving or paying them out ; and they are much more likely to be spent, or put in circulation by the thief, if I am absent than if I remained here, and particularly if he thinks I will never return, of which I have not spoken to any one excepting Miss Wilmot and yourself."

"I am sorry to hear of your loss," replied Adair, "and will do all I can to find out the thief. It might, however, materially aid me to know whom you suspect."

"Henry Rudolph is the man," responded Brantley.

"Henry Rudolph!" exclaimed Adair. "You surprise me! He is considered by many as a model young man."

"Just so!" said Brantley. "But I know him well. He is as sly as a fox, and if he was n't such a coward, would be a very bad and a very dangerous man."

"But," said Adair, "as you have been robbed, you will require some money to travel on. Have you obtained what you require?"

"I have not," Brantley answered. "I must sell my horse if necessary, but I would regret to do so, for I cannot travel so cheaply or pleasantly by stage coach as on horseback. I have here a fine gold watch, worth more than double the amount I require, but that I will not part with. It was presented to me by a friend, now dead and gone, whose life I once saved, as you will see from the inscription on the inside of the case" (which he opened and exhibited). "And, by the way," he continued, "here is evidence that my name is Jefferson Brantley. I had a short time ago," he went on, "a very valuable ruby ring, which you may have noticed,

but that I have parted with—Miss Wilmot has it. She declined to receive it as a present from me, but at my earnest request consented to retain it until my return."

"What amount," asked Adair, "will you require?"

"About fifty dollars," was the answer.

"Give me your note," responded Adair, "for that amount payable, say, in three months, with six per cent. interest from date, and I will let you have the amount. I ask no security."

"This," said Brantley, with much earnestness, "is more than I intended to ask of you; but I accept your offer with many thanks. And let me say this: Showman, sportsman, stranger, whoever or whatever I may be, if we live you will find out that I, Jefferson Brantley, pay my debts as soon as I can, and never forget a friend."

The next morning, Brantley after bidding good-by to a few friends, among them Adair, to whom he spoke a few earnest words in an undertone, mounted his horse and rode away.

After bidding Brantley good-by, Adair went to his room and drafted the letter he proposed to write to the parties whose names Brantley had given him. This finished, he mounted his horse and started to the residence of Mr. Wilmot. As he rode along, his mind naturally reverted to his selection by Miss Wilmot for the confidential work he had been asked to do. He had known her but slightly, but as, it appeared, she had been in conference with Miss Howard, the presumption was that the latter had suggested him as a fit person to be trusted; and this looked the more plausible from Brantley's remark that he—Adair—"was well and favorably known to Miss Howard." But

then there was a wide difference between being "well and favorably known" and being loved! And Warren Davidson! what of him? He had, so it was reported, gone South again. This looked as if Miss Howard had rejected his suit! But no, it was uncertain. Why should she reject Davidson? It would, doubtless, be a good match. Business had perhaps taken Davidson away from home; and he might not desire to get married yet and settle down, for he was still young. Miss Wilmot, no doubt, knew all about it, for she and Miss Howard were evidently confidantes, and he might be able to get the facts from her. But, no, that would not do! What Miss Wilmot knew about the matter, she had doubtless learned under the seal of secrecy; and it would be unfair for him to take advantage of the confidential position he now held to obtain from her Miss Howard's secrets. If he wanted to know, the straightforward and honorable course was for him to learn them from Miss Howard herself. But, situated as he was, it would be worse than folly for him to think about marrying, then why bother his brain about it? Such was about the train of Adair's thoughts as he rode slowly along, whistling in a low key. But, so intently was his mind occupied, had any one stopped him and asked if he had been whistling a hymn or a love ditty, he would doubtless have replied that, until stopped, he was not aware that he had been whistling.

CHAPTER XI.

Adair Visits Miss Wilmot—His Message to Miss Howard—Miss Wilmot's and Miss Howard's Confidential Talk—Laura, Returning Home, Meets Ada—Warren Davidson and Miss Laura—An Angry Suitor.

MISS WILMOT, on seeing Mr. Adair ride up to the front gate and dismount, at once correctly surmised the object of his visit, and was consequently, when exchanging greetings with him, somewhat embarrassed ; nevertheless she welcomed him most cordially ; and, after introducing him to her mother, who was the only other member of the family present, the two seated themselves on chairs in the yard, where they were shaded by a large black maple tree which stood but a few steps from the front door of the house.

Miss Wilmot never looked more comely than on this bright summer morning. She was, as already stated, tall and graceful. Her complexion was so very clear as to make apparent, by contrast, a few freckles on her face and neck, but this by no means detracted from her beauty.

After being seated, Mr. Adair explained his interview with Mr. Brantley, and asked if he had been correctly informed as to her wishes ; and, having replied in the affirmative, she, with some apparent embarrass-

ment, added : " I hope, Mr. Adair, I have not taken too great a liberty in suggesting your name to Mr. Brantley ; and, knowing you so slightly, I should not have done so, but, from more than one of my friends, I have learned of your prudence and obliging disposition."

" You have not taken too great a liberty," he replied, " and you may rely upon my best services and discretion. I should tell you," he continued, " that Mr. Brantley gave me a sketch of his life ; told me, so he said, about what he had already told you, and in addition gave me the names and addresses of five persons to whom I could write for information. I have drafted such a letter as I suppose should be written, and I wish you to read it, and say whether you approve it."

Miss Wilmot received the letter, and after reading it said, as she returned it : " Oh, yes, that will do. But, Mr. Adair, I am sorry if you have taken the trouble to ride out here to submit the letter to me."

" It has been no trouble," he replied, " for I have business farther on, and my visit here has afforded me a pleasant rest."

" But," she added, " don't you think it rather cold and formal—I may say seemingly suspicious—for me to require such information about Mr. Brantley ? I am sure he has not deceived me."

" I have admired your prudence," Adair answered, " in requiring the information before giving him a positive answer."

" But you do not think that he is an unworthy man, and may have deceived me, do you ? " she asked.

" Miss Wilmot," he earnestly responded, " do you wish me to tell you what I think of Mr. Brantley ? "

"Yes, please do," she answered. Then, after a momentary pause, she added: "I know you must have seen and heard much about him since he came to Salem."

"When I first heard of Mr. Brantley," said Adair, "I was told that he was a showman; and, by some, supposed to be more of a gambler than a showman. When, therefore, I heard he was visiting you, I thought you were exposing yourself to some risk in permitting such a visitor. But I have since seen much of him, have heard much said about him, and have never seen or heard of any dishonorable act of his. I now believe him to be a man of much kindliness of heart and many admirable traits of character; I am further convinced that he has not attempted to deceive you, or me, for had I suspected this, I certainly would not have consented to undertake the matter that brought me here. But, having said this much, I must add that I fear Mr. Brantley has entered upon what I regard as a most unfortunate and hazardous career—that of a sportsman or gambler. If he *continues* that career, however kind, attentive, and considerate he may desire and aim to be, the woman who, as his wife, follows his fortunes must expect to be a wanderer, to have no settled home, to be shunned by the best society, subject to violent fluctuations of fortune—perhaps rich to-day and poor to-morrow, and, worse than all, be in almost constant apprehension as to her husband's safety; for, it may be said of most gamblers, that they carry their lives in their hands. It may sound to you harsh or unfeeling for me to speak thus; but if you were my sister, I would ask you to ponder over and weigh well all these matters before you take a step

fraught with such life-time, if not eternal consequences as are involved in the marriage tie."

Mr. Adair spoke slowly at first, and, as he progressed, with increasing impressiveness, for he was deeply in earnest. When he spoke favorably of Mr. Brantley, and of his confidence that he had not attempted to deceive her, Miss Wilmot's face lit up as if some remnant of doubt or fear had been removed from her mind. When he said: "The woman who, as his wife, follows his fortunes must expect to be a wanderer," the courage and confidence of an heroic and trusting soul animated her, and it looked as if it were on her lips to say, "I will follow him to the ends of the earth." When he spoke of society shunning the gambler's wife, defiance of society was apparent in her flashing eye. But the appeal to her, as to "a sister," to ponder well the mighty consequences of the marriage tie, caused a deep solemnity to settle on her face, and it was some moments before she attempted any reply.

"Mr. Adair," she at last said, and her voice showed evidence of emotion, "I know not how it may be with others. It may be that a flame once kindled in a woman's heart may be extinguished, then relit by another, and made to burn as brightly and with as pure a glow as it had done before. But in my heart and brain, *I feel*, with a certainty that exceeds any conviction which emanates from cold reason or experience, that, if this flame is extinguished in my heart, there will be—nothing—left—but ashes! It may be that I am romantic or sentimental—many I know would tell me so,—but this much I do know, *he* came to me a stranger and showman—a mountebank, as some have called him—and I have tried to reason

calmly, to ponder seriously—have, as it were, fought against myself, and yet my heart has gone from me, and — he — has it ! But ! " she exclaimed, " why should I thus speak to you ? I know not, except it be that you have spoken words which *I feel* to be words of ' truth and soberness ' ; words which I am sure have come from an honest man. You have spoken, as no one ever did before to me, of the awful solemnity of the marriage tie, and this has *made* me speak, and speak freely, when womanly reserve might have bid me keep silent."

Adair was surprised by the power and passion of this woman, this farmer's daughter, this almost country girl ! There might not be much twining tenderness in her nature, little of the timid devotee who worships afar off, nothing of the humility and submission of the blind votary ; but, in their stead, there was a proud though sensitive nature ; a companion whom even a strong man might at times lean upon for support ; a courage and devotion that would sustain her when most others had fainted and fallen by the wayside ; an ocean of passion, but a world of love ; and, withal, a woman, and just such a woman as Brantley would need for a wife.

In turn it was some moments before Adair spoke ; at last he said : " I see plainly that you are greatly in earnest in this matter ; and, while I would not recall one word I have said, I would have you distinctly understand that I would be far, very far from advising you or any lady to do violence to the dictates of *her heart* in the matter of marriage ; for I am sure it is, as a rule, by far the safest guide. But now, as regards these letters, I may tell you that Mr. Brantley himself

approved the prudence that caused you to withhold your decision until you could obtain such information regarding him as you desire. Furthermore, when bidding me good-by this morning——"

"What! has he gone?" she interposed. "I knew that he intended going soon, but did not suppose he would do so for several days."

"Yes, he left, as I said, this morning; and told me he would be absent long enough for me to get replies to the letters I am to write. He, however, when leaving, requested me to say to you that he did not wish his intention to return to be publicly known; that, in fact, he wished it thought he would not return."

"And did he give you no reason for this, to me, seemingly strange desire?"

"He did; and such an explanation as would, I am sure, be perfectly satisfactory to you."

"Then," she replied musingly, "it must have grown out of something that has occurred since I saw him, for he mentioned no such desire to me. I hope nothing alarming has occurred, the knowledge of which you have thought it best to withhold from me?"

"Nothing; in fact, he gave me permission to explain the matter to you if necessary, and I have only hesitated because of my dislike to convey unpleasant news."

Mr. Adair then explained about Mr. Brantley having been robbed; that the thief was much more likely to put the stolen money in circulation if it was thought that Mr. Brantley would not return; and that, because of the rare gold coins among the money stolen, it was

hoped they would be able to trace the thief. He, however, withheld from her the name of the man suspected.

"But," she anxiously asked, "as Mr. Brantley was robbed of all his money, how did he get money to go away on?"

"That was loaned him by a friend."

"Excuse me, Mr. Adair," she responded, "if I ask a question I should not, but I greatly desire to know—who—that—friend—was!" And observing him to smile, as she thought, at her seeming curiosity, she quickly added: "Did you loan it to him?"

"I did; but the amount he required was small."

"I am delighted, and thank you sincerely!" she said with much warmth of manner. "Delighted, for it shows me that a prudent and sensible man had confidence enough in the man I love to loan him money. Away with the letters!"

"Nay, nay!" replied Mr. Adair. "Neither your heart, nor my judgment, nor both combined, are infallible. No harm can be done by sending the letters. If the replies are such as you and I expect, it will only make assurance doubly sure, and be proof to your friends of your prudence and discretion. But," he smilingly added, "I can understand that you should wish Mr. Brantley to have this proof of your confidence in him; and, with your permission, I will, on his return, inform him that at this interview you were disposed to require no proof, but that the letters were sent at my instigation."

"I did not give you credit," she laughingly replied, "for so clear an insight into the workings of a woman's heart."

"In this instance," he jocularly responded, "I have perhaps displayed no particular penetration."

"If upon all occasions you could display as much, it would be fortunate," she replied.

"How so?" he asked. "I may not fully understand you."

Miss Wilmot had gone a little further than she intended. She was thinking of Laura Howard, and had said to herself, "I am no longer surprised that she loves this man. And how is it that he has not read her heart?"

"Mr. Adair," she at last said, "you have done Mr. Brantley and myself so great a favor, and in such a kindly and considerate manner, that I feel like commending you to all lovers in distress. And I happen to know of several—such—cases! This, however, would be taxing you too much. You will, however, doubtless discover and relieve many such sufferers."

This reply was evasive, and Mr. Adair so considered it, but it was not for him to ask one more explicit.

"I am sure," he replied, "that I possess no skill in making such discoveries. But I hope you will not hesitate to let me know if at any time I can aid you; or," he added after a short pause, "any of *your friends* who will repose such confidence in me as you have shown. But now, as I have a long ride ahead of me before my day's work is done, I must take leave of you. The letters, I will write to-night and mail them to-morrow; and as soon as replies are received, I will call and show them to you."

"Mr. Adair," she said as she rose from her seat, "how I do wish I could make you some fitting return for your kindness. In *this* won't you assist me?"

"As I have not worked for wages," he answered, "I do not expect payment."

"But," she responded, "there are some debts more sacred than wages for work done, and their discharge should afford the keenest delight! And would you not like to assist me to discharge such a debt—and to yourself?"

"You certainly put your request in a very forcible way; and I must, of course, assist you should I see an opportunity of doing so. And now, good-by."

"One moment!" she said, detaining him. "Will you pass by Squire Howard's this morning?"

"I am on my way," he answered, "to the Sulphur Springs, and will pass by his house."

"Would you then," she asked, "mind stopping there for a moment, and, if Miss Laura is at home, saying to her that I would like much if she would ride over this evening, as I wish specially to see her; and that I would myself ride over and see her, but all of father's horses are at work to-day."

"I will deliver your message," Mr. Adair replied; and, after the usual good-by and handshaking, he mounted his horse and rode away. As he rode along, he could but associate in his mind Miss Wilmot's seeming anxiety to pay him her so-called debt, and her immediate desire to see Miss Howard; but he could not satisfactorily make out the bearings or relations of the two points.

On his arrival at Squire Howard's, it so happened that Miss Laura was alone on the front porch. She asked him to get down and come in, but he excused himself on the plea that he had far to ride; and, after delivering Miss Wilmot's message, and asking after the

health of the family, continued on his way. If he could only have looked back and seen the eyes that followed him, his old resolution would certainly have been severely shaken, if not overthrown.

That afternoon Miss Wilmot and Miss Howard were alone together for an hour or more.

"Laura," began Miss Wilmot, after a few commonplace questions and answers, "I could not resist the temptation to send you the message by Mr. Adair. I just felt as if I *must* have a talk with you and at once."

"Talk on then, and I will be an attentive listener."

"Then, to begin with, I must tell you about my interview with Mr. Adair." And tell her she did,—gave her a detailed account of all that pertained to Mr. Brantley and herself, and dwelt with much emphasis on the part Mr. Adair had played.

"And, Laura," she added, "as you well know, Mr. Adair was a comparative stranger to me. I had met him several times, but never before conversed with him, excepting in the presence of others. To tell you the truth, I had thought him a rather cold and calculating, but prudent and reliable man; and it was for these latter qualities, and my knowledge of the respect entertained for him by Mr. Brantley, and yourself particularly, that induced me to suggest him as a suitable person to make the inquiries. But," she smilingly continued, "my opinion of him has changed. I no longer think him cold and calculating. He is frank, unassuming, kind-hearted, earnest, and sincere, and a wise counsellor and friend. When he spoke to me as if to 'a sister,' of the 'life-time, if not eternal consequences of the marriage tie,' I was never more sol-

emnly impressed. I already feel as if I had known him intimately for years. Never have I met a man to whom I could speak so unreservedly about myself. He has won my confidence because I am sure he deserves it. And oh ! how I would like to repay the debt of gratitude I owe him for his kindness to Mr. Brantley in loaning him money after he had been robbed. But, Laura, you must say nothing about the robbery—not to a soul ! for, if it is kept a secret, Mr. Adair hopes to discover the thief and possibly recover the money. And now, Laura," she went on, " I have been trying to think what I could and ought to do for Mr. Adair to repay him. I am sure you love him, although you have never positively told me so. That you should love him, rather than our old friend and schoolmate, Warren Davidson, has been to me a matter of much surprise, but I am no longer surprised. Now that I know Mr. Adair, I want you to love each other. The question is, Can I do anything to bring that about ? for Mr. Adair will no doubt have occasion to visit me several times about those letters."

" Emily, I am delighted," Laura answered, " to know you have been so much pleased with Mr. Adair ; I was sure you would be when you came to know him well. You have often jokingly asked me if I did not love him, and, whilst I may never have positively confessed that I did, I have certainly never denied it. You know of his having saved my life when a child ; that it was he who presented me with my beautiful emerald ; that it was his image I tried to conjure up and paint in my picture. When I first saw him, as a man, I thought I could see much in him of great worth ; it may have been that my heart instructed my

brain—certain it is, I—loved him! You know that last summer he rescued me from drowning. After that, I, for a time, felt—what might perhaps be called a superstitious conviction—that as he *had been* so he *was to be* the guardian of my life, and with my life also of my love. In this conviction I gave loose rein to my love, and was carried whirling along in a seventh heaven of delight, never dreaming of any check. For how could there be any check? Had not Providence brought *him* to *me*, and had not the same Power twice notably preserved *me* for *him?* But my superstitious conviction was a delusion or a snare. I now *see* it, and *feel* it. Mr. Adair has not deceived me. I believe him incapable of deceiving any one. I have been led on by a kind of will-o'-the-wisp, and have no one to blame but myself. Emily," she concluded in a somewhat husky voice, "he does not love me, and must *not* know that I love him."

"Stop, stop!" cried Emily; "I have come across a love that is worthy of the name,—a veritable romance and not a sickly tale; another gem, like that you wear around your neck, and not a showy pebble; a living life, and not an animated corpse! And such a love must not be permitted to sacrifice itself, nor to wander, like some poor little ewe lamb, away from its fold. See here, Laura! there are many persons who think you are engaged to Warren Davidson! I would be sorry to do Warren any injustice, but, from the way he has often spoken to me of you—as if you were almost certain to be his wife some day,—I am half inclined to think he has himself given rise to these reports, in order to keep other suitors away from you. Now, Mr. Adair may, and doubtless has heard these reports, and

should be undeceived. I can do this without compromising you in the slightest."

"No—no!" was the emphatic reply. "Not one word of this to Mr. Adair. You know, Emily, that I thank you with all my heart for the interest you feel in my happiness. But listen to me! If he loved me, and wished to know whether another stood in his way, he could easily find out. I believe him manly and straightforward enough to come direct to me and learn the truth. No, the truth—and the whole truth—is that he has only a very high regard—I may even say an attachment—for my father, mother, for us all, dating from his boyhood. It may even be that he feels an especial attachment for me, since he has told me that in my childhood I was his little pet, and he doubtless feels that he has special claims upon my regard. But such an attachment is as far from love as night is from day. In fact, I do not believe he loves any one; if he does he will probably never let it be known, for he has doubtless made up his mind never to get married. You know he has brought his sister-in-law—the widow of a brother who recently died—with her three small children, to Salem, where they are now keeping house, and with whom he makes his home. He is just the man to sacrifice himself, if necessary, for the performance of such a duty. So, you see, Emily, I must bear, with what patience and fortitude I may, my sore disappointment; which, I frankly admit, has nearly crushed me; but time, we are told, soothes all such afflictions. If it were not so, the burden of life would soon grow intolerable to all of us."

"What you have said, Laura," replied Miss Emily, "sounds plausible and probable, but I don't like your

conclusions, and suspect they may be wrong. I am, perhaps, naturally impatient. If matters are in doubt, I like to discover the truth, however unpleasant, at once. And I believe I could clear up this whole matter in short order and make you happy, and Mr. Adair happy. That he, if not unhappy, has an unsatisfied spirit,—a longing for some thing he misses, is apparent to me in the lines of his face. But if you say I must do nothing, say nothing, to help you, so be it! I can only hope that all may yet come out right."

That afternoon, as Miss Howard was returning home, she was somewhat surprised to meet her sister Ada in the lane a short distance from the house, and to observe that her face wore a perplexed and serious expression.

"Ada, what is the matter?" her sister hurriedly asked. "What has brought you out to meet me? for I 'm sure that is why you are here."

"Yes, so it is," Ada answered. "So jump down, please; we 'll lead the horse, and as we walk along I 'll tell you all about it."

Laura at once dismounted, and throwing the bridle rein over her arm and walking beside her sister,—"Now, Ada, what is it?" she quickly asked.

"Well, sister, I know you 'll be surprised," began Ada. "Warren Davidson is at the house; came about an hour ago; says he returned home only yesterday. And I don't like the way he looks and talks. I think he must be drinking a little. He has been asking me many questions about Mr. Adair—how long he stayed with us after his sickness—when he was last here, and so on. I told him that Mr. Adair had passed by here this morning, and had delivered you some message

from Miss Emily, and that you had gone over to see her. He seemed much annoyed, and, I think, muttered some kind of a curse. Knowing it was time for you to return, I made an excuse and slipped out the back way and came to meet and tell you, so that you might be prepared to meet him."

"I am glad you did so," replied Laura. "I did hope and think that Warren would never come again as a suitor, but I fear he has. I have told him as plainly as I could that it was useless; and if, as you say, he is drinking, I am all the more displeased that he should have come. But we had better not be seen by him approaching the house together; do you go back the way you came, and I will remount and ride up to the gate as usual."

Then, leading her horse beside a stump which was near, Laura stepped upon it, sprang into her saddle, and rode slowly home.

Warren Davidson saw Miss Laura as she rode up to the gate, and went forward to assist her, but she had dismounted and hitched her horse before he reached her. She met him cordially, and, after the usual greeting, said: "How have you been, and when did you return home?"

"Well in body," was his rather surly answer, "but mentally under the weather. I arrived at home yesterday; came this morning to Salem to see Henry Rudolph, and arrived here an hour ago. I was sorry to find you from home, for I came specially to see you; and I must have a talk with you at once."

Miss Howard, warned by what her sister had told her, looked attentively at her visitor, and saw at once that he was under the influence of liquor. His remark

that he "must have a talk with her at once" was made in such a tone and manner as to really displease her; but, as they had now arrived at the house, she made no reply, asked him to be seated, and to excuse her for a few minutes. She then sought her mother.

"Mother," she said, "you see Warren is here again, much to my surprise and regret; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, he has been drinking and is not entirely sober now. He says he has come to see me, and 'must have a talk with me at once.' What ought I to do?"

"Go at once and have the talk over as soon as possible. He has been drinking, I am certain. Don't anger him if you can avoid it, but be firm. I am very sorry," continued Mrs. Howard, "to see him in this fix; but it shows that your rejection of him was fortunate."

"Well, Warren," said Miss Howard, when she had returned and taken a seat near him, "what is it that you 'must' talk to me about?"

"You know very well," he answered. "I am not satisfied with the answers you have heretofore given me. A woman, I 'm told, often plays with a gentleman, as you have with me, when she thinks she has him securely hooked; but I can't and won't stand this any longer."

"I will not stay and listen to such unfair and unjust charges," said Miss Howard, as she rose from her seat.

"Oh, don't be so touchy! I beg your pardon, I did not mean to hurt your feelings. Please sit down again," he said almost imploringly.

Miss Howard hesitated for a moment, but remem-

bering her mother's injunction, not to make him angry if she could avoid it, she resumed her seat.

"Warren," she calmly and distinctly said, "if you have come here again to renew your suit, I tell you my reply will be unchanged; and this conversation is not only useless, but painful to me. I have ever esteemed you as a friend,—that you know! You know, too, that to have been the cause, however innocent, of any unhappiness to you has been the source of much sorrow to me. If, however, you still persist, against my entreaty, I shall no longer regard you as my friend, nor welcome you to this house."

"Oh, Laura," he pleaded, "don't be so hard on me! Why is it—how is it that your heart can be so cold towards one who has loved you so long and so well? You know that I have worshipped you. And am I not a gentleman? Or, can it be that some one has poisoned me in your estimation?"

"Such questions," was her firm reply, "are unworthy of the Warren Davidson I have known, and shall receive no reply from me."

"Oh, you avoid an answer, do you?" he sarcastically retorted. "Then it is no doubt true, as a friend wrote me, that it is the saddler—oh, I beg your pardon, I should have said Mr. Adair—who has defamed me and cut me out. Well, I may have a settlement to make with him!"

"Warren, stop!" exclaimed Miss Howard, who was somewhat alarmed by his covert threat. "Stop! I declare to you, Mr. Adair has never spoken to me of you, nor aimed in any way to 'defame and cut you out,' as you say. More than that! he has never spoken one word of love to me. And, you know well

enough that I gave you my answer long before I ever knew him ; and should you seek a quarrel with him on my account, you will forever forfeit my respect and friendship."

"Without your love I don't care a ——. But come, Laura, don't let us quarrel. I am not feeling well to-day,—have, I believe, some fever." (It was the fever of passion inflamed by liquor.) "I must not only have your respect and friendship but your love ! I am in earnest ! Will you be my wife ? You must ! Without you I am undone forever !"

"Warren, for heaven's sake," exclaimed Miss Howard, who could but feel compassion for him, "cease to importune me ! You surely cannot know how much this pains me. You know when you first mentioned your love for me, I gave you an answer from which I have never wavered, and never will ! Let us then drop this subject, and let it never, I charge you, be mentioned again."

"Miss Howard, I am a gentleman," retorted Davidson, with an effort at dignity, "and not a beggar for your hand. I have offered you my heart and hand, and you have declined my offer, so be it !"

And with as stately a bow as he, tipsy as he was, could make, he withdrew, mounted his horse, and rode away.

CHAPTER XII.

Davidson and Rudolph—The Lost Coins—Adair's Great Depression and Musings—Simon and Polly Wright—Mrs. Kent and her Son—Adair Settles a Debt—Old Tom and Elijah, a Gratifying Discovery.

THE day following the events narrated in the preceding chapter, Warren Davidson was in Salem, and spent several hours with Henry Rudolph. The two young men were about the same age, and had been schoolmates in boyhood and intimate associates, but had never been fast friends; Rudolph was of too cold a nature to admit of this.

Davidson was above medium height, had dark hair and large brown eyes. He was frank and generous, but impulsive, vacillating, and, when under the influence of liquor, spiteful rather than malicious.

Rudolph was tall and well proportioned; had light yellowish, lustreless hair, blue eyes, and a very light beard, which was always cleanly shaven, after the almost universal fashion of the times. He dressed with scrupulous neatness, and, while ordinarily polite, was so very guarded, both in his speech and manner, and there was such a total absence of any apparent feeling or emotion,—so much of unvarying coldness or indifference in his face and voice, that he had few, if any,

warm personal friends. He was, however, so regular, prudent, and temperate in his habits that he was generally regarded, and particularly by the older and more sedate portion of the community, as a "model young man." His father, who was a farmer, and had several sons and daughters, had presented Henry, when he attained his majority, with a good farm, seven or eight slaves, and five thousand dollars in money. The son, however, passed but little of his time on his farm, which was managed by what he called an "overseer," but who, in reality, was a young countryman that worked as hard as any of the slaves did, and for small wages.

"Henry, I want five hundred dollars, and want you to loan me that amount," said Davidson in the course of their conversation.

"What! want more money?" Rudolph asked, without any evidence of surprise in his tone or manner. "Have you forgotten that you now owe me thirteen hundred?"

"No danger of my forgetting that! you jog my memory so often. I want to make it eighteen hundred. My recent trips South have cost me a round sum, and I have one more trip — a short one — to make."

"I will loan you the money on one condition. To secure the loan of eighteen hundred, you to give me a bill of sale of your two negro men, Isham and Louis. In order not to attract attention, as such sales usually do, the negroes may remain with you; you to pay me for their hire at the rate of nine dollars each, per month, which is at the rate of twelve per cent. interest per annum on the amount loaned you. If you repay me

the entire debt, on or before the first of March next, with twelve per cent. interest, I will return or cancel the bill of sale; that is, the two negroes to remain yours. But if either or both of the negroes should die, or by reason of sickness or accident should be unsound, you are not to be released from the payment of your debt to me, but to furnish me with other good and sufficient security. Do the terms suit you?"

"No, not by a d—— sight! In the first place, I don't want to sell any of my negroes; and, if I did, Isham is about the last one I would part with, for his wife is my cook, and I would not separate them. In the next place, twelve per cent. is too much, the thirteen hundred is only bearing ten."

"If my terms don't suit you, that 's an end of the matter," said Rudolph, who was sure Davidson would agree substantially to his terms rather than incur the trouble and humiliation of finding another lender and making known his condition. "You may be able," he continued, "to find some one else who will make easier terms for you. There 's Adair, the Deputy Sheriff, he might let you have the amount."

This last was, as Rudolph supposed, a suggestion which would be instantly scouted, but he had a purpose in making it.

"What!" exclaimed Davidson, with a supplementary oath, "I don't know the fellow; and, more than that, I don't want to know him."

"Oh, he knows you well enough by reputation to loan you the money," replied the wily Rudolph, "and there is no reason why you should dislike him. I did think at one time, as I wrote you, that he was after Miss Laura, but I now think I was mistaken.

One of his brothers has recently died, and Adair has brought the widow and her three children here, and has gone to housekeeping with them ; and I suppose it will end up by his marrying her some of these days, for she is younger than he is, and rather good-looking. Besides, you have the inside track with Miss Laura."

"Not a —— bit of it ! I went out to see her, as you know, last evening ; and she jockeyed me and flew the track."

"Or, rather, I suppose, she declined to make the race of life with you ; for she is not one, I should think, to back out after agreeing to run ; and much less one to fly the track after beginning the race."

"It amounts to the same thing ! " Davidson petulantly replied. "But I 'm not so d—— heartbroken as you may suppose ! There are 'many good fish in the sea,' and I happen to know a charmer, with a pile of the metal that promotes ease, who would be delighted to become Mrs. Davidson, and I have been hesitating between two opinions for some time."

"Well, well," said Rudolph, "you surprise me ! But young women often change their minds. Besides, it is said 'faint heart never won fair lady,' and you surely are not going to give up ! "

"Yes—d—— me—if I ever give her another chance to play that game over ; and the saddler may have her if he wants her, and welcome to her for all I care. But all this," he added, "is wandering from the subject. I must start home this evening, and I want that five hundred dollars. Strike out Isham and substitute George, who is unmarried and worth as much, and I will accept your terms, although they are d—— hard."

"All right ! " replied Rudolph, who only smiled at

Davidson's remark about the terms. "I will have all the papers for you to sign, and the money ready for you, by four o'clock this evening. Will that be soon enough?"

"That will answer," said Davidson as he left the room.

"He is going it rather fast, and can't keep up the pace," mused Rudolph when alone. "It is well for me to have ample security. That 's rather a good arrangement of mine about the negroes; it gives me a hold on him, for he would n't like it to be known that he had to make such a sale. Besides, if the two negroes are mine on March 1st, as they probably will be, I will get them just in time to begin field work; and in the fall I can perhaps sell them to Fields, the negro trader, for one thousand dollars each. Then, Davidson will spend none of his five hundred dollars here, and probably very little of it in this county; he wants it to take another trip down South, and that will be all the safer for me. How lucky it was I got even with that cheating gambler before he left here! But I wonder where he got money to go away on; he must have had some besides that in his pantaloons pocket. I would n't wrong an honest, hard-working man, but the cheating gambler—I served him right! Ha, ha! And Miss Laura has thrown Davidson overboard! I hardly expected this, but she 's a sensible girl. And it 's about time *I* was taking a wife and settling down, and now 's my chance; and Laura is the lucky one—she 's a beauty, and sensible. I can play the game with her better than Davidson did. As for that Adair, he stands no chance—his age and position are against him. Besides, I doubt if he is in the field. I must go

to work at once ; work and win ! that 's the word." And he rubbed his hands, and glanced into a mirror.

That afternoon as Joseph Adair was passing by the Clerk's office, Horace Benton called him in and told him that Warren Davidson was in town, and had been out to Squire Howard's the evening before. " But," he added, " I am sure he is on a cold trail."

" I am glad to know Davidson is in town," replied Adair, " for he yet owes his taxes for last year ; and, if I can collect the amount, it will save me a long ride to his house."

" Ah ! here he comes," said Benton, pointing to a young gentleman who was riding towards them, and then added : " Shall I call him and introduce you ? "

" Thank you, that is not necessary," Adair answered, as he stepped from the door on to the pavement, near which the horseman would have to pass.

" Excuse me, sir," said Adair addressing the gentleman, who immediately checked his horse. " This is Mr. Warren Davidson, I believe ; " and, on receiving an affirmative answer, added : " I am Mr. Adair, the Deputy Sheriff. Your taxes, Mr. Davidson, for last year, owing—I suppose—to your absence from home, remain unpaid. If it is convenient for you to pay me the amount now, I would be greatly obliged, as it would save me a trip to your house."

" Certainly, sir, certainly ! " replied Davidson, who was always willing to pay his debts when he had money. " I will dismount and come into the Clerk's office and pay you the amount."

Adair entered the Clerk's office, and going to a table in the centre of one of the rooms, which at the moment was unoccupied, took out his leather pocket-book, and

by the time he had found the desired tax bill, Mr. Davidson entered.

Davidson, after taking the chair tendered him by Adair, soon produced the required amount of money, and among it two rare gold coins. "These," said Davidson, referring to the coins, "are, I am told, half doubloons, and worth eight dollars and fifty cents each; at least that is what I took them for, and I suppose you will take them for the same."

"If I mistake not," replied Adair, "these coins are worth only about eight dollars; however, I will take them at your valuation. But," he added with a keen interest in his inquiry, which, however, was not betrayed in his manner or tone, "perhaps you have received them from some one near here to whom I might return them at your valuation, if necessary, to avoid loss on them."

"Yes," Davidson promptly replied, "they were paid me by Henry Rudolph not an hour ago, and he will make it right."

"Thank you," said Adair, as he took up the money and handed Davidson the receipted tax bill. The two gentlemen then walked together from the room, and Davidson, after mounting his horse, said:

"Excuse me, Mr. Adair, but I am quite aware of your intimacy with the family of Squire Howard; and I hope you sufficiently understand the nature of my long and intimate association with Miss Howard to prevent any misapprehension or unpleasantness between us."

"Sir," replied Adair, "I may not understand your meaning, and I would suggest that you be more explicit."

But before Adair's words were concluded, Davidson was riding away, and only replied by a wave of the hand.

"I reckon that remark was a little indefinite," said Davidson to himself after leaving Adair. "There was, however, no *lie* in what I said; but he may and probably will twist it to mean that I am engaged to Laura. And, d—— it, I 'm almost sorry I said it. However, if he does n't love her no harm is done; and if he does, and she loves him, I would like to keep them apart, and trouble her in return for the trouble she has caused me."

And thereupon he took from his pocket a flat bottle and took from it a swig, which doubtless had the effect of allaying somewhat any pain conscientious scruples may have caused him.

After Davidson had ridden away, Adair walked slowly from the town. He wished to be alone. As he walked, his brow was knitted and his lips compressed. Mentally he said: "He could have meant nothing else than to inform me of his engagement to Miss Laura. It is only what I have thought probable, and even desirable for her; and I did not suppose I had harbored so much hope. My long dream is, however, now at an end! And what have I now to look forward to? Much work and a little food and raiment; yes, and such satisfaction, if any, as may be derived from the performance of bounden duties. But what unsubstantial compensation these for old age, sickness, and death! And no wife, no children to accompany and follow me! —children that make our old lives young again, making one a link in a strong chain, instead of a broken link at one end. Behind me, and afar off in the misty

past, there was a parent root from which growth after growth has sprung, budded, blossomed, and brought forth fruit ; but here, alone, I stand,—a withering, dying branch,—no bud, no blossom, no fruit to follow ! ''

And the man, resolute and self-reliant as he usually was, sat down by the wayside to rest, for he had wandered over the hill and far beyond the limits of the town. Then he chanced to think of those two gold coins ; it was a relief to change the current of his thoughts ; and he took the coins from his pocket and carefully compared them with the description of the lost coins given him by Brantley. There could be no mistake—these were two out of the three stolen. And Brantley had suspected Rudolph, and Rudolph had paid the coins to Davidson !

'' And how accidentally,'' he said to himself, continuing the chain of his reflections, '' this discovery was made ! But was it accidental ? Can anything be absolutely accidental ? Is there not a design—a purpose in everything ? And if in the smallest insect, and the tiniest plant that grows, then why not in the minutest affairs and so-called accidents of life ? And here, in Rudolph, is a bad son. Better by far to die and have no son than such as he. Verily, how true the words of Addison :

> '' ' The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate,
> Puzzled with mazes, and perplexed with error ;
> Our understanding searches them in vain.' ''

Here he was startled by a scream—'t was that of a woman, followed by oaths and imprecations from a man. The jarring sounds came from across a little valley ; and, in the '' stillness that came on with

evening," they were very distinct. "More mystery!" he mentally exclaimed. "There is what once was love—earthly love,—for they are husband and wife that quarrel; and now their love wears the garb of anger, if not of hatred." And he arose and walked slowly towards the town—a bowed and lonely man.

That night Adair slept but little, and awoke next morning unrefreshed. After an early breakfast, he mounted his horse and rode westward. He had a disagreeable duty to perform: to seize, on execution, the property of an old and poor man named Elijah Wright who had been a soldier during the Revolutionary war, and was one of the earliest settlers in Livingston County. Adair had heard much of the brave old pioneer and of his devout wife, Polly, who only a few months before had gone to her long rest and rich reward. What made the old couple all the more widely known and esteemed was that they were the parents of Simon Wright, a noted Methodist preacher, who, in his long and eventful life, did perhaps as much and as good work in his Master's cause as any minister who ever labored in the West.

Some thirty-five years before, when the surrounding country was almost an unbroken wilderness, Elijah Wright had made his home (from which he had never removed) near the northern base of Bizzell's Mount, which is situated on the northern bank of the Cumberland River, some six or seven miles from its mouth. The mount rises some three to four hundred feet above the level of the river; and it was, at the time of Adair's visit, covered with a luxuriant growth of cedar trees from base to summit. Standing on the summit and looking northward a range of high hills, a mile or two

distant, could be seen, and, intervening, an irregular valley, through which flowed several small streams. Few more quietly beautiful and picturesque spots could be found in any country ; and in that valley Elijah and Polly Wright had chosen to make their home.

It was related of the devout old Polly that, some years before she died, she selected the spot where she wished to be buried. The spot is a small plateau on the eastern slope of the mount, from which can be seen the Cumberland River as it winds through the hills, and a broad sweeping valley across to the southward, which she often referred to as "the valley of the Shadow." What made the spot chosen for her grave so peculiarly attractive to her was that from it a good view could be obtained of the rising sun ; and there she wished to rest, because, as she said : "In the last chapter of the last book in my Old Testament it is written : 'But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.' Besides," she added, "three verses farther on and next to the last in the book are these words : 'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,' and that comes home to my old heart like a promise to send to me my old husband, Elijah."

As Adair approached the house (of logs, and slowly falling into decay), he observed a middle-aged woman standing in the door ; who, on seeing him dismount, came forward to the gate to meet him. When he had introduced himself, and said that he wished to see Mr. Wright on business, the woman spoke.

"Just as I expected," she said, in a cold, hard voice. "I suppose you have come to take what little

there is left, to pay the balance of that debt against my dead husband. It 's mighty hard, but I reckon there 's no use in complaining. The law 's a hard thing sometimes. Father 's around there in the shade of the house. I will bring you a chair and go with you, for he is a little deaf, and may not hear you plainly."

The old man was seated in a large armed, withy chair, his hands crossed on the top of his strong hickory staff, and his head so bowed that his chin seemed to rest on his breast. As he looked up and perceived the presence of a stranger, his appearance was certainly striking : tall and gaunt, his large head covered with thick, bushy hair almost as white as snow ; his eyebrows, of an iron-gray, were very heavy and long ; and from underneath, deep set in his head, there shone bluish-gray eyes, somewhat dimmed by age, but still bright and penetrating. His strong, broad jaw showed that he had been a man of courage and resolution—just such a man as no one would ever suspect of falsehood or dissimulation ; simple, independent, homely honesty was clearly stamped in every lineament of a face rugged and angular, but which at one time must have been very attractive.

When his daughter spoke to him and explained who the gentleman was, and the nature of his business,—which Adair had virtually admitted by not correcting her supposition,—the old man drew himself up, but not a shade of surprise or displeasure crossed his face as he asked : " Sir, is that your business ? " And when Adair had replied by an affirmative nod, " What, sir, is the exact balance due ? " he asked.

" Sixty-eight dollars and forty cents," was the reply.

" I have no money, sir," the old man said, " but I

have a horse in the stable yonder''—pointing across the road,—'' a yoke of young steers, two cows and calves, and some little corn in my crib. I suppose the horse and steers will bring enough to pay the debt.''

'' Oh, sir,'' said the widowed daughter to Mr. Adair, '' can nothing be done to give us a few months more time? The debt was against my husband, and was at first for four hundred dollars, when my father went security for him. My good man worked hard and paid off the debt as fast as he could, but death came and took him from us. If the horse and steers are taken from us, I don't see how we can get in the crop this fall, or haul firewood next winter. You likely know that my brother Simon is a preacher, but I really don't know what Circuit he was placed on by the last Conference; we, however, hope to have a visit from him soon. He comes to see us as often as he can; he don't often have any money, but when he comes he might be able to arrange this debt in some way; I know he would try.''

'' Madam,'' replied Adair, '' I see that your father is now too old to work. Whom have you to do the farm work?''

'' Only my son Elijah, who is now fourteen years old. He has done all the plowing and hauling this summer. He is a good and industrious boy, and but for him I don't know what we would have done. Yonder he comes now; that 's him with the steers,'' she said, pointing to a stout and well grown boy, who, after stopping his cart at the gate, came rapidly forward to where his mother stood.

'' Elijah,'' said the boy's mother, '' this is the Sheriff, who has come about that debt of your father's.''

The boy stood for some moments with folded arms before he spoke. "I 'm mighty sorry," he said. "If that old skin-flint that the money 's owin' to had only trusted us a year, I would 'ave kep' my word, an' tried to pay him."

"Look here!" said Adair, addressing the sturdy boy. "Have you ever proposed to take upon yourself to pay this debt?"

"I reckon that 's about it, sir," the boy answered. "I told old man Keep if he 'd wait on granpa 'nuther year, I thought I could pay him, an' 'ud do so if I lived."

"Well now," said Mr. Adair, "I 'll tell you what I will do. I see that you are an honest and hard-working boy, and that you are doing all you can to help your mother and aged grandfather. Now, I will pay this debt to Mr. Keep, if you will give me your word—your promise to repay me as soon as you can without depriving your mother or your grandfather of anything they may need."

"That 's mighty good in you!" exclaimed the boy. "I 'll do it! I 'll do it! Put it down in writin', sir, an' I 'll sign it."

"If you were to sign such a promise, it would not be binding on you in law, because you are under age," Adair explained. "However, I will draw up the agreement, which will serve to show the amount of the debt."

"Oh, sir," said the widow, "I thank you—I thank you so much! This takes a load from my heart, and it will be such a comfort to my old father! And you are only a stranger to us, and say you will trust my boy,—but I will go his security, and, should he be

taken from me, I will, if God spares me, pay the debt."

"Madam," replied Adair, "I require no other security than your son's promise."

The old man, who had kept his eyes on the different speakers, but, owing to his deafness, had heard but little of what was said, on observing the emotion of his daughter, rose from his chair, stood erect, and, addressing his daughter, said: "Nelly, how is this?" She placed her hand gently on his shoulder, and bending forward and speaking very distinctly, repeated almost word for word the conversation that had passed between "the gentleman" and her son. When she had spoken, the old man turned slowly to Adair, and, taking him by the hand, said: "Sir, you have done an old man and his widowed daughter a great kindness; you have trusted a good and industrious lad, and will, I am sure, in no wise lose your reward. But," he added, "I have not yet learned your name."

"Adair, sir; Joseph Adair; I am the Deputy Sheriff."

The old man then resumed his seat, and was soon apparently lost in a profound reverie. The boy, meanwhile, by direction of his mother, brought from the house a small table, and Adair, who had pen, ink, and paper with him, soon drew up the agreement, which was as follows:

"HOME NEAR BIZZELL'S MOUNT.

"MR. JOSEPH ADAIR:

"Present. Sir. If you will, as proposed by you, pay the debt due by my grandfather, Elijah Wright,

to Johnson Keep, amounting to sixty-eight dollars and forty cents, I promise to repay you the amount, with interest at the rate of six per cent. per annum, as soon as I can do so without depriving my mother and grandfather of such articles as they may need. Witness my hand this August 2d, 1826; and given in the fifteenth year of my age."

"There," said Adair, handing the agreement to the boy, "can you read that? If so, read it to your mother, and, if all right, you can sign it."

The boy took the agreement, and read it without much difficulty; and, turning his bright eyes up to his mother, said: "Ma, that 's all right."

"Yes, my son," she replied. "And see! Mr. Adair will charge you only six per cent. interest, and your father had to pay Mr. Keep twelve per cent., and give security too."

The boy then went to the table, and in a slow and awkward manner, but with great care and quite legibly, subscribed his name in full, Elijah Kane Kent, and with a flushed face handed the agreement to his friend, who, on receiving it, said:

"Well done! I suppose this is the first written agreement you ever signed; and I have no doubt that at some future day you will be proud, and justly so, to be the possessor of this bit of paper."

"Sir," said the old man, rousing himself from his reverie, and rising from his chair, "did I understand you to say your name was Adair?" And, observing the affirmative nod in answer to his question, he continued: "Many years ago—it was in the days of the Revolution—I knew a brave soldier, under Marion in

Carolina, whose name was Adair—Tom Adair, or Dashing Tom as we generally called him."

At the mention of his father's name, Joseph Adair approached the old man, and, taking him by the hand and speaking so that he could be distinctly heard, said: "Thomas Adair, who fought under General Francis Marion, is my father; and he is yet alive, and I hope will soon visit me at my home in Salem."

On hearing this the old man placed his hand on Adair's shoulder and said: "I thank God that I have seen his son, and that he is such a son! And Tom himself is coming to Salem! My God, if I could but see him!"

"When he arrives," responded Adair, as he pressed the old man's hand, "I will tell him of you, and if you are not able to come to Salem to see him, I will bring him here to see you."

"I pray God to spare me until then! I have long been waiting to join Polly, my wife, on yonder mount, but now I would like to see Tom before I go." And the slow and solemn words of the old man showed the earnestness of his prayer.

Adair having been pressed by Mrs. Kent to remain for dinner did so, and his horse was well cared for by his young friend. After dinner, which was a plain but substantial meal, Adair remained for some hours in conversation with the old man, and was much interested in the account given him of many of the pioneer settlers of the county. But what interested him most was that the old man told him of many incidents in the early life of his father, Thomas Adair, which he, Joseph, had never heard before. From these it appeared that not only had Elijah Wright and Tom Adair been fellow

soldiers and warm personal friends, but on one occasion, during a skirmish, Tom's horse having been killed under him, his friend Elijah rushed to his rescue when he was about falling into the hands of the enemy, and assisting him to mount behind him, they were both borne safely out of danger.

Adair, as he rode home that afternoon, felt much satisfaction in the reflection that he had been able to serve the worthy family as he had done ; for, in addition to the pleasure ever derived from kindly acts, he had aided the friend and companion in early life of his own father. This served, in some measure, to dispel the gloom occasioned by his interview the day before with Davidson, and the consequent certainty, as he now thought, that the woman he had loved so earnestly had given her heart and would soon give her hand to another.

CHAPTER XIII.

The "Unfortunate" Gowan Family—Adair Summons a *Posse*—Rudolph's Trepidation—The *Posse's* Ride—Holman's Sad Story of John Dyer and his Wife.

SOON after his visit to the old pioneer, Elijah Wright, Adair had another exceedingly disagreeable official duty to perform.

About the year 1808 or 1809, there removed from Virginia, and settled on a farm on the Ohio River, a few miles above its junction with the Cumberland, a physician named Gowan, whose family consisted of his wife, three sons, two daughters, and a dozen or more slaves. The Doctor was known to be highly connected, his wife being the sister of one of the most eminent of American statesmen; but never, perhaps, was there a more unfortunate family. The Doctor was a highly educated man, but of a cold, haughty disposition; and why he should have left the comforts and refined society of his native State, and have settled in such a wilderness as the western part of Kentucky was at that date, was always a mystery. His wife, who was believed to have led a most unhappy life, had resided in her new home but a few years when she died, and was buried in a lonely grave in the forest, a short distance from the residence.

Thereafter, the Doctor and his two daughters, who were just verging into womanhood, passed most of their time in Salem, and rarely visited the farm. A little later, Randall, the eldest son, died from the effect of a snake bite ; and Hinton, the second son, soon afterwards lost his wife, who was buried beside her mother-in-law. Hinton, however, remained a widower only a year or two, and then married a very beautiful young lady—one of the belles of Livingston County.

There were many strange and contradictory rumors about Hinton and his second wife. There were those who said that, owing to his dissipation and cruelty to his slaves, his young and beautiful wife was not only thoroughly miserable, but was in constant apprehension lest her husband should do herself some personal violence. On the other hand, there were those who said that Hinton, during the lifetime of his first wife, was a temperate man, a kind husband, and a strict but not unkind master, and that his cold, proud, and scornful young wife—his "cruel Letitia," as he was known to have once called her—was the cause of most of the troubles into which he fell.

About a year after Hinton Gowan's second marriage, and when his wife was confined to her bed—she having a few days before given birth to a child,—a negro boy named George, a kind of general house servant, suddenly disappeared, and, after remaining secreted for a few days, was arrested and bound with chains in one of the cabins near the residence. That night, horrible to relate, Hinton Gowan and his younger brother, Walter, caused most of the slaves on the farm to assemble in the cabin where George was bound, flat upon the floor, with each limb extended, and, with drawn

pistols, forced one of the negro men to literally chop the bound boy to pieces, and, as joint by joint and limb by limb were severed from the body, they were cast into a roaring fire prepared for the purpose of consuming every trace of the body. When the hellish work was done, the assembled slaves were given to understand that such a fate as George's awaited any of them who should ever whisper a word about George's fate ; and, if questioned regarding his disappearance, they were to answer that he had run away and had never been heard from. The cowed slaves were further told that should any of them ever run away they would, when captured, be treated as George had been.

When the two drunken and fiendish brothers left the cabin and were returning to their house, a sudden and terrific rumbling noise was heard, and soon the surface of the earth seemed to rise and fall—rise and fall again like quick succeeding waves. To add to the horror of the phenomena, what appeared like a great blazing ball of fire darted hissing through the heavens, apparently close by, and by its brilliancy momentarily lighting up every object around, which but a moment before was shrouded in dense darkness. The drunken brothers were each prostrated upon the ground by the violence of the earthquake shock (for such it was), and one of them, Walter, in his horrible affright, cried out : " My God ! my God ! ! what is this ? " The reply of the beastly brother by his side was : " It 's only the devil in h—l rejoicing over having got hold of George ! "

When Hinton Gowan, some minutes afterwards, staggered into the bedroom where his sick wife lay, he found her upon the floor, and apparently lifeless. Two

female servants were quickly summoned, and after repeatedly sprinkling water in her face and chafing her hands, the young mother showed signs of returning consciousness. The shrieks of the boy George, as he was being slowly murdered, had reached her ears, and she knew that some horrible tragedy was being enacted. This caused her to faint, and the violence of the earthquake shock had thrown her from the bed on to the floor. A few days later, the mother and child mysteriously disappeared from the home of Hinton Gowan, and when next heard from were under the roof and carefully guarded by the parents of the unhappy woman.

For several days affairs went on at the farm of the Gowans as if no unusual event had occurred; but fewer haughty orders were given, and fewer loud words were spoken than usual. But the time did come, and that very soon, when the disappearance of the boy George was talked about; and day by day public attention was more aroused, and fresh suspicion awakened. Finally, it was known that a highly respected farmer, a neighbor of the Gowans, when passing near the house, had seen a dog gnawing what he discovered to be a human jaw-bone. Then, what had been whispered suspicions rose into a loud cry for vengeance; for the two brothers, Hinton and Walter Gowan, had previously been strongly suspected of having plotted to decoy Miss Ritchie from her home, and escape with her to Illinois, where a ceremony uniting her to Walter Gowan was to be performed, or other and greater outrages enacted.

Before, however, the gathering storm had time to burst, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Hinton

and Walter Gowan, and placed in the hands of Joseph Adair.

Adair was in Salem when he received the warrant. His first step was to go to the Clerk's office and confer with his friend Horace Benton.

Benton well knew of the reports in circulation regarding the Gowan brothers, and was thoroughly informed as to the current of public opinion on the subject, hence was not surprised by what Adair told him. "Well, Adair," he said after a few moments' reflection, "the Gowans are now, no doubt, desperate men, and you should have a good *posse* with you when you undertake to arrest them; and include me in the lot."

"Thank you," replied Adair. "Then get ready as soon as you can. I will pick up some others as soon as possible, and will try and be ready to start within an hour."

On the street the first man Adair met was Henry Rudolph, and stopping him, he said: "Mr. Rudolph, I summon you as one of a *posse comitatus* to aid me in arresting certain parties, as per warrant just placed in my hands. I know you have a good horse; be ready to start within an hour."

"My dear Adair," replied Rudolph, whose white face had turned rather whiter than usual, "please excuse me. I have some important matters to attend to this evening."

"I am sorry to inconvenience any one," said Adair, "but this matter admits of no delay," and walked away. He soon found three others to accompany him, of whom his friend and partner, Duncan, was one; Silas Holman, a well-known hunter was another; and Dabney Coffield, a young farmer, the third. Within

an hour all assembled in front of the Brick Hotel with their horses.

Before mounting, Benton, addressing the *posse*, said : " Before starting on so hazardous an expedition as that before us, it is the proper thing—in fact the bounden duty of the officer, under whose command this *posse comitatus* has the honor of serving, to see that each and every man shall not only be allowed but required to take a stiff drink of rifle whiskey with the requisite gunpowder concomitants ; the aforesaid preparation to be imbibed at the expense of our said commanding officer, to whose health and success we——"

" Cut it short ! " interposed Adair, jocularly ; for he well knew there would be no dissenting voice. " And as I have to treat, let it be quickly over, for we have no time to lose." So saying he led the way into the bar-room of the hotel, the *posse* being followed by several others, who had been attracted to the spot by the unusual sight of six men, and horses held in readiness for mounting. In the crowd was Ben Bolton, the burly blacksmith, who, after the free and easy manner of the times, when with friends, waited for no invitation, but stepped up to the bar and said : " I 'll never be g'ilty of sich deesrispec' to a' officer of the law, as ter refuse ter drink with him."

There was soon a jingling of glasses and a smacking of lips. Rudolph watched for an opportunity to speak privately to Adair, and again urged to be excused from going; said that his engagements were of the most urgent nature, etc. His pleas were, however, overheard, and at once several jocular remarks and innuendoes were aimed at him, followed by an almost unanimous declaration that no " backing out "

must be allowed ; Benton declaring that the *posse* was already too small, considering the hazardous nature of the undertaking ; and that, in an emergency like the present, individual duties must give way to the public weal.

" Come, let 's be off," said Adair, leading the way ; and the six men were soon mounted and riding rapidly down the road in a westerly direction ; Adair and Duncan riding side by side in advance, and Benton and Rudolph bringing up the rear. Benton had long suspected that his companion was a " coward, most devout coward, religious in it," but had never seen him fairly tested. He, however, now watched him closely, and, shrewd and observant as he was, it did not take him long to discover that Rudolph was really nervous about the risk to be run. This only provoked Benton to put on his most serious face, and not only agree with his " friend " as to the " imminence of the danger to be encountered," but he went so far as to say : " Rudolph, you are a man of property and noted for your prudence ; I may, therefore, hope that you have not, like too many others, neglected so important a matter as the making of your will."

" What ! a *will?* " said Rudolph, with emphasis ; for the bare mention of such a document—a document that was of no importance until after one was *dead*—served to sensibly increase his uneasiness, but he made an effort to shake it off, and, with a rather ghastly smile, continued : " No, I have made none ; nor have I thought it necessary."

" There is no telling what a day or an hour may bring forth," said Benton, in his gravest and most lugubrious tones.

During the ride, Benton sought an opportunity, and, approaching Adair's side, said : "Our friend Rudolph is a little nervous, and, to cure him of so pernicious and womanly an ailment, I would respectfully suggest that, when the fight begins, you place him in the van ; and leave me, of known and approved courage, to bring up the rear."

Adair knew Benton well enough to regard his wish to be left in the rear as other than a humorous request ; but as his reference to Rudolph's nervousness confirmed his own and Brantley's opinion of the man's cowardice, he felt some inclination to adopt Benton's suggestion ; but no man was further from being a practical joker, and he smilingly replied that he did n't suppose there would be any occasion to test one's courage.

The road they were travelling—that leading from Salem to "The Point," opposite Smithland,—passes, when about three miles from Salem, over Champion's hill, from the summit of which a beautiful view is obtained of the almost circular and undulating valley, near the centre of which, and clearly to be seen, Salem is situated. Here Adair, who was, like most men given to reflection, a great admirer of natural scenery, made a short pause to survey the scene before him. Looking eastward, the "deep-tangled wild woods," the cultivated fields, a few distant farm-houses, then the town, the peak of Gray's knob, and the range of high hills which curve around to the south and west, made up a picture of quiet beauty bordering upon grandeur, such as would have enraptured many a landscape painter.

But Adair's pause was only for a few moments, and

gave his noble horse, Ben Simon, of whom he was ever mindful, a short breathing spell after ascending the long and steep hill. From the top of Champion's hill the road for seven or eight miles wound through a high and comparatively level country. Then came the steep descent of Dyer's hill, at the base of which, and but a few yards to the north of the road, there was, and doubtless is yet, a remarkable spring. Adair was asked by Silas Holman, the hunter, who was riding by his side at the time, if he had ever examined the spring. Adair replied that he had often passed along that road, but was not aware that there was any spring in the vicinity. Holman then pointed out its exact location, and added, "By all means, when you have leisure, stop and see it."

Dyer's spring did not then come to the surface of the ground, but we are told that in recent years marked changes have taken place. Then, by stepping down an irregular natural stairway some six or eight feet, there could be seen, on the left, a considerable stream of water spouting from a hole in the rocks, and forming a small pool which rapidly whirled around the base of a boulder in its centre, then disappeared, on the right, with a hissing, gurgling sound.

A short distance to the west of the spring, and in a wild and lonely glen, through which a branch flowed, there then stood a small log cabin, near which—and the only clearing in sight—was a small garden spot. Holman, addressing Adair as they rode in front of the cabin, said :

"A few years ago a strong and robust young man lived in that cabin. His wife was but a little over sixteen years old when she was confined to her bed, she

having just given birth to her first child. The old midwife, having been suddenly summoned to attend elsewhere, the young husband had to watch by the bedside of his sick wife all night. In the early dawn he walked out into his little garden there" (pointing), "and, stopping, rested with his hand placed on a large stump near the gate. On that stump was coiled a large rattlesnake. It is said the rattlesnake never strikes without giving warning by sounding its rattles, but, if that one gave any, it was unheard by the quick ears of poor John Dyer, for he knew well the sound and the danger. The reptile struck him a fearful blow on the thumb, just under the nail. He sprang back, and, picking up a large rock, soon killed the snake. He put the wounded thumb into his mouth and tried to suck out the poison; and he might possibly thus have saved his life, but unfortunately his lips were slightly ulcerated, and the poison sucked from his thumb perhaps re-entered his system through these sores. Be that as it may, he returned to the house as soon as he could, and as gently and calmly as possible told his poor young wife what had happened. He told her not to attempt to rise from her bed, as it would endanger her life; that she must live to care for their baby boy; that he had drunk what whiskey there was in the cabin, and that it had had no effect upon him whatever; that he then knew medicine and human skill would be of no use; and that his hours were nearly numbered, for he could already feel the burning poison darting through his veins. And then," continued Holman, with a tremor in his deep but musical voice, "poor John, in order to spare his darling young wife the pang of witnessing his inevitable dying con-

tortions, said : ' Now, Molly, darling, show your love for me by staying in bed ; don't try to help me ! Some one will pass along the road before the day is over, and you can call and send word to the neighbors. I will be found in the corn crib. Oh, Molly, how I love you ! but I must say good-by, and may God bless you and our dear baby !' But before his last words were spoken his hand and face were fearfully swollen, and, blinded and reeling, he rushed from the house, intending to find a bed among the shucks in the crib ; but he fell and never rose again. His wife witnessed his terrible struggles ; and held his head as he breathed his last on the grass in the yard back of the cabin. She said afterwards that she had always tried to obey ' her John,' but she was wild for a while, she reckoned, for she did n't know what she had done."

" A few hours later," Holman resumed, " I came down that ravine by the spring ; I had been hunting, and had killed a deer and one wild turkey, and, with the turkey, I was on my way to John's cabin to present his wife, whom I had known from childhood, with my turkey and ask for a breakfast in exchange ; which, however, she would cheerfully have prepared for me, even had I been empty-handed. You may judge," he went on,—and his voice was so husky that he spoke with some apparent effort,—" of my horror when I arrived at the house and found John lying dead in the backyard, and his young wife with just enough life in her to tell me what had happened. I did all I could for the poor girl, but that was very little. A few neighbors were summoned, and they were very kind and attentive ; but a few days after we had buried poor John, we laid his young wife in her grave by his side."

"And the baby-boy?" asked Adair, who had listened to the simple but pathetic story with absorbing interest, and, at moments, with a choking sensation; "yes, the poor little thing, what became of it?"

"It is still alive, and well cared for by its grandparents—the father and mother of poor Molly," Holman answered.

Adair gave a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER XIV.

Silas Holman, the Hunter and Fiddler—The *Posse* Arrives at the Gowan Residence—A Horrible Crime—Suicide in a Graveyard—Walter Gowan Sent under Guard to Salem—Adair Quiets the Alarmed Slaves.

THE sad story of John Dyer and his young wife lingered for many a day in the mind of Joseph Adair. The story also awakened his interest in the story-teller, Silas Holman, of whom he had heard much, but with whom he had never been intimate. He knew that Holman, who was then about forty years of age, was a widower ; that a maiden sister—a retiring, inoffensive woman, but supposed by many to be at times slightly deranged—kept house for him ; that he cultivated a few acres of land, and raised about enough corn to furnish bread and feed his one horse and cow ; and that he kept a pack of hounds, and was famous all the country round as a hunter. He further knew that Holman was noted as a fiddler, and that he and Billy Wilmot (a brother of Miss Emily) were in demand for miles around whenever there was to be a dance. In fact, the two fiddlers, although they played entirely by ear, could keep such perfect time, and played such animating tunes, that the oldest and cold-

est could scarcely keep from shuffling their feet and longing to join in the merry dance. It was said by an old and very devout member of the church that Silas and Billy could "fiddle the young folks out of the church about as fast as the preachers could get them in."

Adair had furthermore heard about Holman's "peculiar views": that his mind was a veritable storehouse of country lore; that he treasured up every ghost story he had ever heard; that he knew somewhat of the whole supernatural tribe—of wraiths, the very image of persons yet alive; of spectres dire, and of their dismal groans; of ghosts, that came and went, and of their nightly cry; of guilty sprites, that sought out gaping graves; of demons, that gulled the unwary to their certain doom; of wily wizards, and their secret work; of goblins, full of wrath; of wrinkled witches, and their blackest arts; of gnomes, that make their homes in mines and caves and guard the treasures of the inner earth; of fairies, and their magic wands; and even of diminutive elves, that "hop as light as bird from brier."

Of supernatural matters, Holman, however, rarely spoke, and never during the bright glare of day; only in the gloaming would a strange sadness sometimes come over him, and then, if he were with a sympathetic friend, he would talk freely, and with such a peculiar rhythmic cadence in his deep-toned voice as to be very impressive. On such occasions he rarely spoke as if from personal knowledge, but as if from information received; and never expressed credulity or incredulity, however strange his narrative, further than by sometimes repeating the lines:

"It may or it may not be true,
For none of us can know
What 's going on in heaven above,
Or in the earth below."

From such conversations, most persons would have supposed Holman a fearfully superstitious man, but it was well known that he was often alone in fields or forest by night, and was believed to fear neither man, nor beast, nor any of the ghostly tribe.

But before the cabin where John and Molly Dyer had lived and died, Holman appeared a very different man —one of deep feeling and genuine sympathy.

When the *posse* arrived at the foot of Wheeler's hill, three miles from "The Point," they left the main road, and turned to the right along a dim country road through a very dense forest. The trees, even some of the largest oaks, were so covered and bound together by grape vines, and the light was so obscured that, to men less accustomed to the forest, the gloom would have been oppressive, if not ominous of danger. Continuing their course for about a mile, they came to a cypress swamp, which was, however, now nearly dry, but as it was boggy in many places, it was safe to cross only by following a very rough corduroy road, which extended for a hundred yards or more ; and, as soon as they had entered upon this, a boy, on the high ground beyond, was seen to ride from the forest into the road, and, applying the whip to his horse, disappeared at full speed.

"There goes a messenger !" exclaimed Duncan, who was at the moment riding beside Adair, in advance. "And, doubtless, to give notice of our approach. We have apparently been expected, and as it was known

that, in order to cross the swamp, we would have to ride over this corduroy road, the boy was evidently stationed where he could not fail to both hear and see us."

"That I think very probable," replied Adair. "And, now," he added, as soon as the rough road had been passed, "let us ride as rapidly as we can." And he led off at a sweeping gallop and soon arrived at the entrance to a lane which was usually guarded by a heavy wooden gate, but this was found open. The lane, which was about four hundred yards long, led between corn-fields up to a gate on the south side of the large yard which surrounded the residence of the Gowans, which faced towards the west.

Halting at the first gate for a moment, Adair directed Benton and Rudolph to pass around the field on the right, approach the river above the house at a distance not exceeding two or three hundred yards, and to arrest the Gowans should they attempt to escape in that direction. He gave similar instructions to Duncan and Coffield, who were to go to the left and below the house; while he, Adair, with Holman, would approach the house direct.

"If," said Adair before the parties dispersed, "you should hear two short, quick blasts from Holman's horn" (which was suspended at the latter's side), "you will approach as rapidly as possible, while one long blast will be for you to assemble at your leisure."

The parties then dispersed. Adair and Holman, riding leisurely along the lane, soon came in sight of the house, around which all was quiet; the only sign of life being two negro children playing in the yard, who, upon seeing the horsemen, ran into the kitchen

at the back of the house. At the yard gate, Adair and Holman dismounted, and, having hitched their horses, passed through the yard around to the front door, at which they knocked. The door was soon opened by a young negro woman, who, in reply to Mr. Adair's question, if her master was at home, said : " No, sir ; bofe Mahs Hinton and Mahs Walter dey bofe gon' out."

" Do you know where they have gone, or when they are expected back ? " was the next inquiry.

" I s'pose deys gone a huntin', sir," answered the woman, whose trembling voice plainly indicated that she feared some trouble was at hand. " 'Cause dey took dar guns, an' went up de river ; an' dey 'll maby be back 'bout sundown, but dey did n't say, sir."

" How long," she was then asked, " has it been since they left the house ? "

" Oh, sir," she answered, " dey haint bin gon' many minits—not more 'an quarter an hour—O Lord ! " she quickly exclaimed as the report of a rifle rang out clearly on the still evening air ; " dat 's Mahs Hinton's gun ; I knows it."

" Then," replied Mr. Adair, " we will walk up in that direction, and hope to see your masters without the delay of awaiting their return."

Adair and Holman then passed from the yard through the western gate, and, turning to the right, passed between the field and the river bank, along which were many trees left standing, to prevent the bank from washing when the river was high. There was a narrow path along this strip, and they walked rapidly until they reached the upper corner of the field. There they paused for a moment to look around.

"That rifle," said Holman, "was not fired one hundred yards from this spot, and it must have been fired from the rising ground on our right."

To the "rising ground" they at once directed their steps, and soon discovered that, on the top of a hill, a small space had been cleared, and was inclosed by a post-and-railing fence.

"That inclosure," said Holman, pausing and placing his hand on the arm of Adair, and speaking with peculiar emphasis and almost reverential awe, "must be a graveyard, and no hunter would have fired his gun on such a spot. But list!" he added, bending forward, his mouth well open to assist his ears in catching the slightest sound, "there is a groan!" Then bounding away, and placing his hand on the topmost rail of the fence he sprang over, and a moment later called to Adair to "Come quick!"

Adair ran forward and found Holman on his knees supporting the head of Hinton Gowan, who had fallen between two graves—those of his first wife and his mother,—but he was not yet dead; there was a slight gurgling sound from his throat and a little blood was oozing from his lips. Holman, the experienced hunter, instantly turned the wounded man over on his face, and, pressing slightly on his back between the shoulder-blades, forced a quantity of blood from his mouth; then, turning him quickly back again, and raising him to a sitting posture, he wiped the blood from the mouth, and, taking a small flask from an inner pocket of his coat, he poured a little whiskey down the poor fellow's throat, who in a few moments revived sufficiently to stare around. Another moment and he spoke:

"I—did it," he said; "shot—myself. Walter—was—to shoot—himself. We—crazy—when we—had George—killed. Lord!——"

Then there came another spurt of blood from the mouth; the dying man threw up his right arm and, as if waving good-by to some one, tried again to speak, and then a short, sharp quiver ran through his whole frame. Holman gently placed the man's head on the grave-mound beside him, and said to Adair, "It 's all over!"

Moments passed and not a word had been spoken when Holman, placing his long, curved horn to his mouth, gave one long, wailing blast, which sounded, as it went up from that lonely graveyard and reverberated through the forest and across the broad, still river, as if it had borne away upon its wind-waves the spirit of the dead man who lay at his feet.

But what had become of Walter Gowan? Holman traced steps to the north side of the inclosure, where a loaded rifle was found on the ground nearly hidden by weeds. He further traced steps, evidently made by some one running, which he followed until he came near to the river, where he found Walter Gowan, who surrendered without resistance.

Soon after Holman had returned with his prisoner to where Adair was in the graveyard, they were joined by Benton and Rudolph, and a few minutes later by Duncan and Coffield.

"My God! what has happened?" was the first exclamation of Benton. A few words from Adair served to explain what had taken place.

When Walter Gowan was brought by Holman to near where his dead brother lay, he burst into tears,

and it was some moments before he was sufficiently composed to answer the few questions asked him by Adair. From these it was learned that Walter and his brother, supposing they would soon be arrested, had resolved to kill themselves, and had come to the graveyard for that purpose; that, after each of them had placed his gun against his own breast, Hinton had accidentally fired first, and, seeing his brother about to fall, he, Walter, had dropped his own gun, clasped his brother, laid him upon the ground, and the sight of his brother's blood and awful face had so unnerved him that, instead of shooting himself, as he should have done, he had run away—to the river, hoping to find a canoe at a certain point and escape into Illinois, but not finding the canoe he had been arrested.

A rude litter was soon constructed by Holman, who, with his large and sharp hunting-knife, soon cut two stiff poles, and so laced them together, with bark from young hickory and pawpaw bushes, that the body could be placed upon it, and it was then borne to the house by Benton, Rudolph, Duncan, and Coffield. Holman, in charge of Walter Gowan, followed. Adair went before, and, after summoning all the slaves who were in or about the house, explained to them the sad occurrence. The poor cowed slaves appeared for some moments to be so dumfounded that they were unable to realize what had taken place, but when they did so, some of them gave vent to loud lamentations, others wrung their hands, and all showed signs of great distress. Their predominant thought seemed to have been expressed by old Jim, the patriarch of the farm, when he exclaimed, "God help us! an' what 's ter becum er us poor niggers?"

Mr. Adair could make them no definite reply, but spoke in a kind yet decided manner, saying the matter would, no doubt, be determined as soon as certain papers could be examined, and he hoped all would turn out well for them ; but, in the meanwhile, they must remain upon the farm, and go about their work as usual.

When the body of Hinton Gowan was received at the house, and Walter Gowan was seen standing nearby with his arms bound behind his back, the slaves again gave expression, as before, to their grief, and this, too, notwithstanding one of their number had so recently been inhumanly butchered before their eyes.

Adair then walked aside with Walter Gowan, and remained in conversation with him for some minutes ; after which he summoned his *posse*, excepting Holman, who remained in charge of the prisoner, to a private room, where he informed them that Walter Gowan had told him that, just before leaving for the graveyard, his brother Hinton had written to a friend in Smithland, a Mr. James Hawley, informing him that he, Hinton, and his brother intended to put an end to their lives in a few hours ; that their bodies would be found in the graveyard ; and begging him to come at once and see that their bodies were decently interred, etc.

" And from what Walter Gowan tells me," Adair added, " I think it not improbable that Mr. Hawley, to whom that letter was dispatched some two hours ago by a special messenger, will be here this evening or to-night, but not perhaps in time for me to await his arrival and then return to Salem. I have therefore concluded to send Walter Gowan at once, under guard,

to Salem, where he can be lodged in jail. And, Mr. Rudolph, as you have pressing business to attend to, I presume you would like to be one of the guard ? ''

'' Yes, sir,'' answered Rudolph, somewhat stiffly.

'' And I would like to be another of the guard,'' said Coffield, '' as I have some special matters to attend to on my farm to-morrow morning.''

'' All right ! '' replied Adair. '' And now, gentlemen,'' he added, '' if there are others of you who specially desire to return to Salem this evening, you can do so ; but, otherwise, as the guard of two will be quite sufficient, I would be glad to have you remain here, and return with me to-morrow.''

Duncan and Benton at once agreed to remain, as did also Holman, when spoken to on the subject a few minutes later.

'' Then it only remains,'' said Adair, '' to have Gowan's horse brought out, for he must ride.'' Then calling old Jim, he gave the necessary order, and the horse was soon in readiness.

The prisoner, having been previously examined and found unarmed, was then required to mount, after which he was so bound that he could not spring from his horse, and yet his hands were left sufficiently free to guide his horse ; which, in addition to a bridle, wore a halter with a long rein, to be held by the guard riding beside him. All being in readiness to start, Walter Gowan, who was very pale, and had spoken but few words since his arrest, cast a lingering look around, and tears, which he evidently strove to repress, came into his eyes ; but, after bowing slightly to Mr. Adair, he turned to his guard, and in a husky and scarcely audible voice said, '' I am ready.''

When the prisoner and his guard had ridden away, Adair turned to his remaining companions and suggested that a second messenger should be dispatched to Smithland, to inform Mr. Hawley, if there, and if not, then to inform Doctor Clayton, the family physician, of the death of Hinton and the arrest of Walter Gowan, and request that a coffin be sent by the skiff carrying the messenger, so that Hinton might be duly buried. The suggestion was at once approved, and Adair, after writing a short note, dispatched two able-bodied negroes, who were good oarsmen, with instructions to row down to Smithland as soon as possible, and deliver the note to Mr. Hawley or Doctor Clayton.

Adair then informed old Hannah, the cook, that he and his three friends intended remaining all night, and probably until after the burial, which seemed to take a great load from off her mind, for she at once exclaimed: "I 's mi'ty glad, sir! an' so 'll all us be. I 'll tell Sophy, an' she 'll hav' de bedrooms in order fur you all; an' I 'll 'tend ter gettin' de meals fur you. An' dars Jim; I 'll speak ter him, an' he 'll hav' yer hosses took keer uv."

Old Jim then approached, and seemed even more delighted than Hannah that the "gem'men" were going to remain; for, after promising to take "de best o' keer uv de hosses," and tendering his services to do anything required, he added, shaking his head slowly: "Ef yous gemmen hed gon' off, an' lef' us poor niggers here, wif Mahs Hinton's corps, de Lord only know what 'ud 'uv come er us."

CHAPTER XV.

Holman and the Picture—The Strange Note—Holman's "Impressions"—Adair and Holman on the River Bank—Ghostly Predictions—Dr. Clayton and Mr. Hawley—Omens—Mr. Hawley's Statement—Indications of Insanity.

WHEN Adair returned to the room where he had left Holman, he found him alone, and apparently plunged in a profound reverie. Not wishing to disturb him, he picked up a book which was close at hand, and sought a seat nearby behind Holman and close to a window. Before opening his book he again glanced at his companion, who sat as motionless as a statue, excepting that he occasionally raised his hand to his mouth, and, removing his pipe, slowly blew out a small jet of smoke, while his eyes seemed intently fastened on a faded, half-length oil portrait of a young lady which hung upon the wall. Adair had not before observed the picture, but as he now looked at it, he saw it was that of a young lady apparently not more than eighteen years of age ; that in her hair was stuck a tortoise-shell comb which towered much above the crown of her head ; that around the neck were high, stiff, white ruffles ; that the dress was of a pale yellowish silk, the waist remarkably short, and the sleeves

remarkably full, excepting at the shoulders and wrists, where they fitted closely. The face was rather a pleasing one, and would have been considered beautiful but for the lower jaw, which was somewhat too broad and square.

Turning his eyes from the picture, Adair began thinking of the singularly abstracted manner of his companion ; and then of the seemingly good judgment, coolness, and dexterity he had displayed in reviving the wounded man in the graveyard, so that he was able to utter the few but important words spoken. At this moment, on opening the book there fell from it a note, whereupon Holman's spell seemed broken, and, rousing himself, he quietly remarked, "I thought so," and, turning his face towards Adair, saw him pick up the note from the floor.

"And what was it you thought?" Adair asked a little curiously.

"About that note," Holman answered. "You see that picture," he resumed—indicating that of the young lady,—"well, I make it out, that 's the mother —taken before her marriage—of the dead man *in there*"—pointing through an open door. "And I 've been studying that face—waiting to see if it would not speak to me—no, not speak to me, exactly, but *impress* me ; and the impression came as I thought it would. There is, I suspect, an important message in that note."

These singular statements, all made in Holman's ordinary deep voice, but accompanied by a peculiar expression on his face, puzzled Adair very much ; and on turning over the note he was further surprised to find it addressed as follows :

"The *finder* of this Note

Will please *open* and *read* it."

The note was sealed with wax, and had evidently never been opened. Adair, showing the superscription to Holman, said: "This is singular! Have you any idea of its contents?"

"Only the *impression* I have already referred to," Holman answered, without manifesting the least surprise at the question asked him.

Adair at once opened the note. It was not dated, and there were but three lines, in a man's handwriting, which ran as follows:

"If you know Horace Benton, of Salem, tell him (or send him this note) not to be too certain. She deceived poor W——, and —— deceive him.

"H. G."

Before speaking, Adair mentally reasoned thus: "The missing word before 'deceive' should doubtless be 'may' or 'will.' But why was the note sealed? As it was to be opened by any one who found it, why not leave it unsealed? Force of habit, perhaps; or he may have thought if it was found by any one of the negroes, they, seeing the large seal, would think it important and show it to some one who could read. And why was the note hid in this book? Oh, he perhaps wrote it before determining the day or hour when he would commit suicide, and he did not wish it found too soon; possibly he intended to take it from the book before the fatal hour, and leave it where it would more likely be found, but forgot it. And why this warning from Hinton Gowan to Benton?—for that 'H. G.'

stands for Hinton Gowan there can be no doubt ; and that ' she ' stands for Miss Ritchie, and ' W——' for Walter Gowan, is almost certain." Then, handing the note to Holman, he said : " This is strange ; read it, and let me know what you think of it."

The writing was not very legible, and Holman scanned the lines and the entire note for some time before he replied. " There is one word missing, but I make it out that the dead man, in there, warns Horace Benton not to be too certain of his standing with Miss Ritchie."

" But why do you think Miss Ritchie is referred to ? " Adair asked.

" Why ? Well, I know of the rumpus between her and Walter Gowan," Holman answered. " I have heard too that Benton has been paying her much attention ; and this, no doubt, *he* "—motioning towards the next room—" knew. Benton has done nothing wrong in the matter, that 's certain ; else *he* "—again the same motion as before—" would n't have written this. But *she* may have treated the dead man's brother badly, and Walter may be less to blame than most people suppose. Besides, when I was looking at that picture I was thinking of Miss Ritchie at the moment the *impression* came to me. A thought of *her* came into my mind ! Where that thought came from—who sent it, whether it was the *picture* of the dead woman, or whether it arose in my own mind, I know not. But this I *do* know : I sometimes have, or *feel impressions* that I accept, at once, as true, without further proof. That 's what I call *instinct*, and I trust more to it than I do to what men call *reason*. Reason 's a mighty poor, blind guide. *Men* reason, and see how wrong

they go ! *Animals* have superior senses ; can see, hear, and smell better than *men ;* they are closer observers, and have better memories ; can even foretell the changes in the *weather,* about which men know next to nothing without observing the actions of animals and fowls. And as animals rarely make mistakes, rarely go wrong when left to their own guidance, I can't understand why men boast about *reason* and decry *instinct.* Besides, I have noticed that when man's reason is partially overthrown, he is more cunning, more observant, and quicker of perception than he was before. I have, therefore, as a man, and as a hunter, aimed to cultivate my *instinct* rather than my *reason*— my feelings or *impressions* rather than my *logic.*"

There is no telling what more this strange man (who had evidently reasoned much and had observed attentively, in order to arrive at his strange conclusions, and had thus, in a measure, upset his theories) might have said, but he was interrupted by the entrance of Benton and Duncan, which was soon followed by the announcement, by old Hannah, that supper was ready. While the four gentlemen were at supper, old Jim and Sophy stayed in the room they had left, it being the invariable custom to have some watcher remain with the corpse.

The supper over, Duncan and Benton took the place of watchers, while Adair and Holman walked out to the river bank. On their way, Adair suggested that it would perhaps be better not to mention the note to any one excepting Benton, as it might give rise to the painful publicity of a young lady's name in connection with a deplorable event ; and that it would not be advisable to mention the matter, or even show the note to Benton,

until they had left there. To all of which Holman assented.

When Adair and Holman reached the river bank, and had taken seats on a bench under a ghostly, white-limbed sycamore tree, the sun had already set, and there was no moon to throw her silver mantle o'er the sleeping earth, but one by one the baby stars were coming forth to peer on field and forest and on the silent, flowing river. It was just that gloaming hour when garish day breathes out its little span, to await its resurrection on the coming morn—an hour when meditative minds are prone to dwell on spiritual things rather than on those of time and sense. And the very bench on which they sat had been, during the sad years she spent on the farm, the favorite retreat of the mother of Hinton and Walter Gowan. There she often sat alone, for, from that point, not only could a charming view be obtained of "the beautiful river,"—which was here nearly a mile in width, and, within view, encircled three picturesque islands,—but seated here the unhappy wife and mother might hope to see some flat boat floating past, and possibly obtain from the crew some old weekly newspaper which would furnish her with some scrap of news from her old home beyond the mountains.

After a protracted silence, Holman was the first to speak. "From this night forward," he said, "yonder house will be to most negroes and to many whites a *haunted house.* Within its precincts a negro boy was brutally murdered! I knew, or *felt* that I knew the very cabin where the devilish deed was done as soon as I laid my eyes on it. Moreover, from the door of yonder house went forth a strong man whose mind was

haunted by a vision of that black boy's face, to drive which away he killed himself. It is not that death has been in yonder house, but death in such a hideous form and shape as will forever stamp it as a *haunted house*."

Just then, away down the river could be heard the sound of oars as they clicked in the rowlocks; and presently could be heard the slush of water from the oars, and the rippling water parted by a skiff's sharp bow.

The skiff landed a few yards below, and under the high bank where Holman and Adair were seated. Four men stepped out; two of them were the negroes who had pulled the skiff, and the others were Mr. Hawley and Doctor Clayton. Silently the two gentlemen walked up the bank. Adair, who knew them, met them, and, after short greetings, introduced his companion, Holman. Then there were several questions and answers, all in a subdued tone, and by the time the new-comers had reached the house, they knew all that was known regarding Hinton Gowan's death. On entering the house, the gentlemen were introduced to Mr. Duncan—Benton they knew quite well. Greetings in a silent sort of way were soon over.

The six men then entered the room where the dead man lay. The Doctor stepped forward and removed the white linen cloth that covered the face, so cold and white; placed his hand on the damp, cold forehead; felt the clammy hands that were folded across the breast; and then——

And then there came a long dismal howl from a dog in the yard, that crouched upon its haunches, and seemed to be looking up into space; in response, apparently to the howling dog, there came from under the

eaves of the house the shrill cry of the screech-owl, uttered as if in extreme anguish ; then, from back of the field, came the oft-repeated injunction to "Whip-poor-Will" ; and from afar off—from the deep, dense, dark forest, came the question of the sentinel owl—"Who comes, who comes, who comes there?" Lastly, "O Lord ! O Lord !" came in frightened tones from one of the negro cabins. Five men, in that room with the dead man, shrugged their shoulders as if cold shivering chills crept down their backs. But Holman only slowly rubbed his hands and said to himself, "I *felt* it."

The Doctor having re-covered the cold, white face and stepped back from the bedside, all retired into the adjoining room, where hung the picture.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Hawley, after a short silence, "I should explain to you that, as an old friend of the family, I received, some hours ago, a letter written by Hinton Gowan this morning ; in which, after referring to his 'cruel Letitia,' as he called his wife, and of her having left him—taking with her their 'darling baby,' he goes on to say that life had become an intolerable burden ; that he and his brother Walter intended to kill themselves ; that by the time I received his note they would both be dead ; that their bodies would be found near their mother's grave ; and he begged me to come and see that their bodies were decently interred. This, gentlemen," he continued, "is the substance of his letter, which, however, contains some further wild ravings about his cruel Letitia ; that she had misjudged him, but that he forgave her, and would pray for her, etc. The letter proves, to me, that the writer's mind was deranged ; and this, too,

was no doubt the case when the negro boy George was put to death. In confirmation of this, I may tell you, gentlemen, that I have known the family for years, and that the father, Doctor Gowan, is, to say the least, a very—very strange man. Furthermore, a brother of Doctor Gowan, who was some years ago Governor of the Territory of ——, did, when in the zenith of his fame and popularity, blow his brains out without any assignable cause; showing conclusively, to my mind, a plain streak of insanity in several members of the family.

"And, Mr. Adair," Mr. Hawley resumed, "I should tell you that I was on my way to see Doctor Clayton,—who has for some years been the physician of the family,—with the letter I had received from Hinton Gowan, when I met the messenger sent by you, and received your note. We brought up with us, as you saw, a coffin; and the Doctor and I think the burial should take place quietly to-morrow, as there are no friends whose arrival can be expected. Doctor Gowan, as you, Mr. Adair, perhaps know, was, a short while ago, in Salem, with his two daughters. But he, I understand,—and much to the surprise of most of his friends,—suddenly left for Virginia, leaving his daughters in or near Salem. I should add that as there is now no white person here to take charge of the farm and slaves, I will, as an old friend of the family, attend to the matter until I can hear from Doctor Gowan, to whom I will write at once, and inform him of all that has transpired. One word more! We—the Doctor and I—have to thank you, Mr. Adair, and your friends, for remaining here until now; and we trust you can and will all remain until we have buried the body of Hinton Gowan."

"We will remain," responded Adair.

(It should be understood that there was then no such an official as a Coroner in the county; nor were any legal requirements necessary before an interment could take place of one who had died by violence, as in this case.)

A few hours later all had retired to bed excepting Adair and Duncan, who kept watch over the body of Hinton Gowan until two o'clock A.M., when Benton and Holman, who had retired early, arose and took their places and watched during the remainder of the night.

That night, while Adair and Duncan were sitting alone in the room where the portrait of the lady hung, Duncan told his friend the story of his life.

CHAPTER XVI.

George Duncan's Story—His Recollections of Liverpool, England—His Voyage to Charleston, S. C.—St. Andrew's Society—In Philadelphia—His Letter to Jennie Bannerman, and the Answer—George and his Brother Go West—At the Cave-in-Rock—Night and a Storm on the Ohio River—George Arrives in Smithland.

THE story of George Duncan's life, which he told to Joseph Adair, was as follows :

"Adair," he began, "you have often spoken to me of your boyhood's days, have told me something of your family—particularly of the good old Quaker brothers,—and of your travels and adventures since the close of your apprenticeship. In return, I have told you pretty much who and what I am ; but there is one story of my life I have never told you, and I have lately been wishing for a quiet leisure time to do so.

"To begin then at the beginning, I was born in old Scotland about eight and twenty years ago. My father was for many years the bookkeeper and confidential clerk in a large woollen mill in the city of Glasgow. His old employer dying, left my father two hundred pounds, or nearly one thousand dollars, which was more money than he had ever had before. He was then five and thirty years of age, and had a wife and

two sons—John McGregor Duncan, aged four, and myself, aged two. After the death of his old employer, my father obtained a situation in Liverpool, England, with Messrs. Mason & Cook, who were engaged in the American trade.

"For three years all went well, but then my—good—mother—died! Her death made such an impression on me that it is yet distinct in my memory. We lived on what was known as Duke Street, and near a large quarry on the side of a hill. It was my delight to go to the top of the hill, where I could see the broad Mersey, on which Liverpool is situated, and see the big ships as they sailed in and out of the port; and could also look down into the great, deep quarry and hear the cannon-like reports of each blast. But the day came when the quarry, as such, was abandoned, and it was converted into a cemetery; and there my dear mother was buried,—not in an ordinary grave, but in a vault hewn out of a wall of soft reddish sandstone.

"My mother gone, home was no longer home to my poor father; and, a few months later, he gladly accepted a proposition, made him by Messrs. Mason & Cook, to go out to Charleston, South Carolina, as their agent. We sailed from Liverpool in the good ship *Annie Royden*, Captain James Bailey, and after a rough voyage, during which I suffered much from sea-sickness, we arrived safely in Charleston harbor.

"My father obtained boarding for us three with a Scotch family. There had already been organized in Charleston a society known as Saint Andrew's, composed of members of Scotch birth or descent, and designed for social and benevolent purposes. My father soon became a member. A few months later came

another terrible blow : my—poor—father—died ! commending his sons to the care and protection of the Society of St. Andrew. Well and nobly the society did its duty by us poor orphan boys ; they buried our father, and found us homes among its members ; mine with a Mr. Bannerman, a married man with but one child—a little girl about one year younger than myself ; and my brother with a Mr. Muir, who was married but had no children. We both had good homes. The secretary of St. Andrew's wrote to Messrs. Mason & Cook of the death of my father ; and, in reply, received from them a letter in which they not only spoke of their great regret at losing a friend and agent whom they esteemed so highly, but they remitted the society the amount of my father's credit with them, and a year's salary—two hundred and fifty pounds,—to be used, at the discretion of the society, in the maintenance and education of us two boys. That money was, I am sure, religiously devoted to those purposes.

" Soon after our father died, my brother was placed at school ; but for the first year my chief duty, and pleasure, was to play with little Jennie Bannerman, whom I soon loved as a little sister, and run on short errands for Mrs. Bannerman, who always addressed me as her ' son.'

" Thirteen more years rolled rapidly away, during which my brother and I went to school some six months in each year ; and, after we had passed our twelfth year, when not going to school, we were put to work : I to learn the saddlery trade ; and my brother, that of a hatter. Those, on the whole, were pleasant days ; for, orphan though I was, I had a loving brother, almost a father and a mother in Mr. and Mrs. Banner-

man,—who were sober, industrious, and pious people,—and, as time went on, in little Jennie I had more than a sister. Smile if you will, but I had begun to look forward to the time when Jennie and I would be man and wife; and although we had never told our love, we looked and acted it every day.

"But then came a time—a long time of sorrow and misfortunes. First, Mr. Muir, with whom my brother lived, moved to New Orleans, but John did not wish to leave me and chose to remain. He was now old enough to manage for himself and earn a living; and for a time he found a home with me in the family of Mr. Bannerman. But alas! this was speedily followed by the death of Mr. Bannerman, who had ever been a delicate man. Mrs. Bannerman's parents were still living in Scotland, and thither she, in a few months, sailed with her daughter Jennie; and I, a boy of nineteen, was left, excepting for my brother, alone and almost broken-hearted. But still there was hope. Jennie had said to me before we parted that she would 'na'er forget her George,' and would wait through the 'lang, lang years' for me to come o'er the seas and bring her back again. And I prayed God to prosper me, and hasten the day when I could return to my native isle, see again the grave of my mother, in the solid rock of the quarry-cemetery at Liverpool, and then 'hie to auld Scotia,' and claim for wife the bonniest lass that e'er the sun shone on.

"To my father, home was home no longer when my mother had died, and so now that Jennie was away, Charleston—although I had every reason to love the good old town and its people—was no longer like a home to me. A strange unquiet, a restless longing

for change, came over both my brother and myself. But whither should we go? There was a ship in port to sail soon for Philadelphia, and thither we determined to go. Our friends of St. Andrew's gave us testimonials as to our character, and with letters of introduction to two business firms in Philadelphia, and about twenty dollars each in our pockets—after paying our passage,—on board we went. We had hoped to work our way, but the ship, the *Sergeant Jasper*, had her full complement of men, and we had to go as passengers.

"As we sailed out of Charleston harbor, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I had indeed and in truth unmoored and ventured out upon the voyage of life; and how little did I dream that I was to drift away into this western wilderness. But I was not alone; I had my brother by my side. I was young and hopeful, and I was nearing Jennie. Both John and I suffered much from sea-sickness, but in due time we arrived in Philadelphia.

"Thanks to the letters of introduction, but more particularly to the testimonials we had from St. Andrew's Society, we soon obtained employment: John with a furrier, and I in a small saddlery warehouse.

"Soon after my arrival in Philadelphia, I wrote to Jennie. That letter cost me more than a day's hard work. It was the first I had ever written, and I had much to say: why I had left Charleston; then a description of that never-to-be-forgotten sea voyage; of my new home and employment; and, finally, of how hard I intended to work, and how saving I would be, so that I might soon make that other sea voyage, which no one else in all the world but she could induce me to

undertake. For days and nights I dreamed of the delight my letter would give the dear lass. And then the time came when I supposed she might be reading it ; and then—oh, how slowly the days did pass away ! for surely the answer was on the way to me, and when, oh ! when would I receive it ? At last, after months of weary waiting, a letter came *to me*, but——"

Here Duncan stopped. His voice had for some moments been husky, but now tears were in his eyes. At last he stammered out some apology for his weakness.

"Make no excuse," said Adair. "I am glad to see that you can shed tears. It is nature's own method of relief. I have often wished that I could find relief in tears, but in the arid desert of my heart there is no fountain."

Duncan looked up as these words were spoken. The man, the face, the tone of voice, everything betokened that it was no mere figure of speech Adair had used, but a veritable truth he had spoken ; and, impressed as he was, it was some moments before he resumed his narrative.

"That letter," Duncan resumed, "was not from Jennie, but from her mother. She told me, in few words, of a violent cold, a cough, and then a rapid consumption ; that her darling had read my letter o'er and o'er again, and kissed it ; that she had talked *of* me, and, at times, *to* me, as if I were present before her eyes ; that the struggle was soon over, and how the dear, dear lass went quietly to sleep—the sleep of death—with a smile on her face. Then the mother spoke of her great bereavement, and of her earnest desire and prayer to follow the loved ones who had gone before.

"When I had finished reading that letter it seemed to me that the sun of my life had gone down—had set in black clouds, the shadows of death, and never to rise again with 'healing in his wings.' Then came another longing for change, for adventure, excitement, danger, anything to escape from myself! But my brother did not wish to leave Philadelphia, and, without him, I would not go. However, in the course of two years he obtained a good general knowledge of furs and peltries and of the trade in them; and he then conceived the idea that there was a great fortune in store for him, by going to the far West and buying and shipping furs to the Eastern markets, and he wished me to go with him. His proposition pleased me much, for what, thought I, could be more exciting and alluring than the life of a hunter, trapper, and trader among the Indians. Our preparations were soon completed; and, with our old testimonials from St. Andrew's Society at Charleston, and open letters of introduction from our employers in Philadelphia, we started, our objective point being St. Louis, Missouri. We descended the Ohio River, from Pittsburg to Louisville, in a flat boat, and after remaining a few days in Louisville we again started on another flat boat, intending to go on it as far as the mouth of the Ohio River or near there.

"Then began the most memorable journey of my life, and one that I cannot look back upon without mingled feelings and emotions. The boat—a 'broadhorn'—was in charge of one Jonathan Lumley, who owned a large proportion of the cargo, which consisted of corn, provisions, and whiskey. With Mr. Lumley were three other stout young men as hands,

making, with my brother and myself,—who had agreed to work our way for food and passage,—six persons on board.

"Day after day as we floated along, and I got better acquainted with my companions, the more I found that, under a rough exterior, they were warm-hearted, generous, and confiding fellows, equally ready for a jig or a knock-down, for a shooting match or a drinking bout, for a song or a sermon.

"But now I come to a part of my story that stirs my blood to this day, notwithstanding the four years almost which have since elapsed. Our boat was nearing Cave-in-Rock, and when within full view of the high rocky bluff, at the base of which is the entrance of the Cave, we observed a woman, on the top of the bluff, hailing us, by waving a white cloth, whereupon our captain, as we called Mr. Lumley, ordered us to pull in close to shore, within easy speaking distance, so as to learn what was wanted.

"Presently a man came from the entrance of the Cave, and called out: 'Hey, Cap! have yer enny bacon or whiskey on board?'

"'I—yie!' shouted back our captain.

"'Won't yer land? We 're short er rations here, an' want ter buy right smart!' said the man.

"'Goin' to the lower Mississippi!' answered our captain, 'and don't want to break bulk so high up.'

"'But, Cap, we 'ud be mi'ty obleeged ef you 'd lan'. An' we 've got a woman here and a boy who want passage down ter the mouth er Cumberlan'. They 've bin waitin' a long time, an 'll pay passage.'

"'All right then,' replied Cap, 'I 'll land; but let them come aboard at once.'"

"And land we did some two hundred yards below the Cave; when the captain and three others—my brother being one of them—went ashore and walked up to the Cave. After waiting for more than an hour, and none of our men returning, I asked my remaining companion to go up to the Cave and see what was detaining them. Another hour passed away; the sun had gone down, and night, with clouds, was rapidly coming on.

"I began to feel uneasy, and, to add to my uneasiness, a large dog, which we had on board, began howling most dismally. Presently, by the dim twilight, I saw three men approaching the boat from the Cave; and, at first, I thought them a part of our crew, but I was soon undeceived, for they came on board and, with pistols drawn, demanded my surrender. Resistance was useless; and my arms were soon bound behind my back, and I was told that if I made any row my brains would be blown out. I asked about my friends, but was only told that they were 'all right'; that the captain had 'sold the boat and cargo'; and that was 'enough' for me 'to know.'

"I was then blindfolded, and when my money had been taken from me, I was assisted—I should say lifted—into a skiff, into which two of the three men, so I thought, entered. I begged to know what had become of my brother, whom I described to them, and told them that he and I were only passengers on the boat, and no part of the crew proper. I did this, hoping that, if they knew we were only passengers, and had no direct interest in the boat and cargo, they would think us less likely to return to the Cave and molest them. But the only answer I got was, that the 'fewer

questions' I asked the better it would be for me by a d—— sight.'

"The skiff was then rowed away—in what direction I could not tell, but in some five minutes there was a pause in the rowing, and soon a slight jar as of two skiffs coming together, followed by a conversation carried on in whispers, the purport of which I could not catch. Very soon, however, one of the men approached me and whispered in my ear. There seemed to be a remnant of mercy in the intonations of those whispered words, rather than in the words themselves. He said: 'We 're goin' ter vi'late orders a little, an' turn yer loose here in the middle er the river. An' the furder yer float away frum here 'fore yer make enny noise, the better fer yer by a d—— sight. You 'd better lay low an' keep dark till mornin' comes.' The speaker then slackened the cords that bound my arms, after which he again whispered: 'Yer ken work 'em loose when we 're gone, say in 'bout an' hour, but not sooner, or yer may get inter trouble. An' don't yer never come back here to ax enny questions, or yer 'll fare a d—— sight worse, an' do nobody enny good.'

"The man then left me, seated in the stern of the skiff, and I could tell, from the motion and the rattling of a chain, that a second boat was being pulled alongside it, into which the man stepped, leaving me alone, I strained my ears to catch the slightest sound, but I could neither hear the click of oars nor the dip of a paddle, but the latter might have been used so noiselessly as to be unheard. I was, therefore, in doubt; I thought possibly the other boat might be floating close to me, and that I was being watched. This brought to my mind the man's caution, not to

try and free my arms for an hour. I, therefore, remained quiet for about that length of time, and no sound reached me except the moaning of the night winds among the forest trees that lined each shore, the occasional barking of wolves, and the weird cry of night-fowls—particularly the blood-curdling hooting of great owls.

"Oh, what an hour was that! What a host of memories and fears rushed through my mind! My chief fear was for my brother. Was he dead or alive? Even if alive, how and when could we ever find each other in this wilderness of the West? I was so overcome by these thoughts that I was almost tempted to spring into the river with my arms bound, and terminate a life that was so lonely—that had so much of darkness and danger around it, and not one gleam of light ahead. But my next thought was that poor John, if alive, would pass his life in hunting for me, and the thought of the joy our meeting would give him aroused me to the value of my own life.

"After a long and painful effort, I succeeded in releasing my arms, and then in freeing my eyes from the bandage. On looking around I found the heavens overcast, not a star was to be seen, and the night was so intensely dark that I could see only a dim outline of the shore. I was floating near the middle of the river. I then examined the skiff, but there were neither oars nor paddle in it. What was I to do? Was I to float along thus helplessly until, by hallooing, I could attract some one to my assistance? But I was only floating some two or three miles per hour, and it might be many hours before I would pass any habitation. I, therefore, made up my mind to lie down in the

skiff, try and get some sleep, and await the coming of morn. But the distant, growling thunder was creeping nearer and nearer ; flash after flash lit up the heavens, followed by almost deafening discharges that rolled, crashed, and reverberated along the river and among the forests, which moaned and groaned under the pressure of the rising wind. Then the waves in the river were momentarily increasing, and were dashing my little skiff about in a way that was alarming. Moreover, I soon found that I was being driven, by the force of the wind, toward the Kentucky shore, and it was necessary for me to be on the alert, lest I be driven against some steep bank, or some snag, and be swamped. Soon the rain, which at intervals had been falling in large drops, suddenly ceased ; there was a momentary calm, a stillness and sultriness in the atmosphere—and then—I can never forget it !—there was a blinding zigzagged line of fire from zenith to horizon, followed by a crash so near, so terrific, that it seemed as if the solid earth had been rent in twain ; and, in a moment more, the rain came down in such a deluging sheet that it really appeared as if that mighty thunder clap had shivered the bottom of the heavens above and let through the angry flood of waters. In a few moments the turbulent waves of the river were flattened out as if by a fiat of Omnipotence. But, thought I, if this downpour continues for many minutes my skiff will be filled and sink. And how was I to bail it out ? There was but one way : to use my thick leather shoes as a scoop. I worked manfully while the rain lasted, but, fortunately, this was not for more than an hour, and towards the close by no means so heavy as at the beginning.

"The long night finally passed, but the heavens were still overcast. I peered along both banks—looked, hoping to see smoke curling above some cabin chimney, but there was no sign of human habitation. Occasionally I raised my voice to its highest pitch—gave a loud halloo, but no answering voice was returned. However, about an hour later, I saw, ahead of me, an island, and it was evidently inhabited, for, notwithstanding the leaden aspect of the skies, I could see smoke ascending from among the trees. I used my hands as paddles as vigorously as I could, so as to drift against the head of the island, and succeeded. I secured my boat, soon found the cabin, and was kindly received by a Mr. Prior and his wife, who gave me a good breakfast. I told them of my misfortunes, and they expressed much sympathy for me. Mr. Prior, who seemed to be an honest and intelligent man, told me that he was one of the earliest settlers in those 'parts'; that he had often heard of the depredations of the Wilson gang about the Cave, and that I was lucky to have escaped with my life; that the gang had been organized some ten or fifteen years before the Territory of Illinois was organized into a State (in December, 1818); that they were then (in 1822) so numerous and thoroughly organized, as to set the law, in such a thinly settled country, almost at defiance. He finally advised me to stop at Smithland, at the mouth of the Cumberland River, where I might obtain assistance and directions as to what was best for me to do. Mr. Prior then, with his axe, made me, out of a clapboard, a paddle; and bidding him and his kind wife good-by, I returned to my skiff, pushed off, and that evening arrived in Smithland.

"In Smithland, I went to a hotel kept by a large, jovial-looking gentleman, and from his name, McDougal, I inferred that he was from Scotland, or of Scotch descent. I was, as you will understand, in a sad plight: wet by the drenching rain of the previous night; and, not having slept for the previous thirty-six hours, was haggard, hungry, and sleepy. I told the landlord my misfortunes, showed him my testimonial from St. Andrew's Society, told him that I was hungry and sleepy, and that I had no money, but would leave with him the skiff, which, however, did not belong to me, unless I was to consider it as a partial compensation, from my captors, for the money they had taken from me. My story told, the old fellow patted me on the shoulder and said I had 'come to the right house.' He then ordered from the bar a 'stiff hot whiskey toddy,' which he handed me, saying: 'Drink this, me lad, drink ye every drap o' it; it 'll do ye good.' I did drink it, and it—was—good. Soon I had a good meal, a room with a fire in it to dry my clothes, and a good bed.

"The next day my story was generally known, the landlord having spoken of it to the crowd that assembled every evening at the hotel. Many were the expressions of sympathy I received. Reports and rumors of such outrages had reached them before. There were a few who favored forming a band of Regulators, and marching to the Cave and making open war against all of the Wilson gang. But the older and cooler heads pooh-poohed such a course: (1) They would, so it was contended, in thus taking the law in their own hands, probably confound the innocent with the guilty, since no one knew of whom

the so-called gang was composed. (2) That the gang had, perhaps, emissaries or sympathizers in Smithland, who would inform them of any expedition sent against them. (3) That Jim Wilson, who was generally supposed to be the chief of the gang, lived in Kentucky, but no one had ever been able to trace any crime positively home to him. (4) While the tale I had told was doubtless true, yet it was the tale of but one man, and that man a stranger. (5) And, finally, that there was no use in my appealing to the law in Kentucky, for the offence, if any, was committed in the State of Illinois.

"This was sufficient to show me that, so far as the law was concerned, I could not hope for any assistance in finding my brother, or in punishing the Cave robbers; the latter was, of course, a secondary consideration, but to find my brother, if alive, was to be the work of my life, and how to go about it was the question. After conferring with my kind landlord, I determined, in the first place, to write to my brother's friends in Philadelphia and Charleston of how his separation from me had occurred, and request them, should they hear from him, to write to me at Smithland; my friend, Mr. McDougal, being authorized, should I be absent, to open and read my letters and forward them to me if important. Thinking it probable that my brother would, if released, continue his journey to St. Louis, I also wrote to a furrier in that place. These letters dispatched, I resolved to visit the neighborhood of the Cave, and try to obtain some information regarding my brother. Mr. McDougal, who alone knew of my purpose, gave me a note of introduction to Squire Howard, of Salem. But I have made my story

so much longer than I intended, that I fear I have tired you, and will hasten over the remainder of it."

"No," replied Adair, "I have been much interested. You have made the hours, which promised to be slow and sad ones, pass rapidly away. Go on, and tell me fully of your search."

"Of that," said Duncan, "I will narrate the chief incidents, which will lead me up to a matter of much moment to me at present, and about which I wish your counsel and advice."

CHAPTER XVII.

George Duncan in Salem—His Hunt for his Brother—He Meets Miss Catherine Wilson—He Tells her his Mission—Mingo, the Slave—In Wilson's House—Mingo's Hunt and Warning—Miss Wilson and the Flute—George's Hurried Departure—Mingo's Disclosures—George, and Col. Lovell's Family, and Laura Howard.

"THEN, to begin where I left off," said Duncan, on resuming the story of his life which he told to Adair, "Mr. McDougal sold the old skiff for a few dollars, which he insisted on my taking, saying I could pay his bill when it was convenient for me to do so. I then set out for Salem; and on my arrival there I had a long talk with Squire Howard, who then lived in town. He at once took a deep interest in my affairs and aided me in every way he could. After remaining in Salem for a few days, and obtaining such information as I could about Wilson and his gang, I was so impatient to learn something of my brother that I determined to make a start.

"I had learned that Wilson was ordinarily hospitable, and occasionally ostentatiously benevolent; and that he had a wife and one unmarried daughter. I therefore determined, after consultation with Squire Howard, to go to Wilson's house; to represent myself as a journeyman saddler on my way to Illinois, where I

had a relative living; and, as I was about out of money, to ask if he could not give me a job of repairing saddles, bridles, harness, etc. I accordingly procured in Salem the few tools I would require, and, with these in a pack, off I trudged. But, before leaving, Squire Howard gave me a note of introduction to his son-in-law, Colonel Lovell; who, he said, lived but a few miles from Wilson's, and to whom he advised me to apply for assistance in case my plans should not work well.

"Just before sunset I was walking down a hill, a mile, as I afterwards learned, from Wilson's house, and slipping sprained my ankle. It was some time before I attempted to resume my journey, and when I did so I found it impossible to walk, and sat down. I was about hallooing for assistance, when I heard the tramp of a horse's feet, and, looking back up the hill, saw a lady riding towards me, and by her horse's side an immense dog. At the same moment the dog bounded forward with a deep growl as if about to attack me, whereupon the lady cried out: 'You Growler! Come back! Be quiet!' When she came near me, I saw that she was young and beautiful, and, raising my hat, I said: 'I thank you for calling off your dog, for he would be a formidable antagonist for any one, and particularly one in my helpless condition.'

"'Why, or how is it, sir, that you are helpless?' she asked, reining up her horse.

"I explained the accident that had befallen me, and asked her if she would not be kind enough to try and send some one to my assistance, as I was unable to walk. Suddenly, and before making any reply, she dismounted, and leading her horse to where I sat:

"'Let me assist you,' she said. 'Take my horse; it is only a mile to my father's house, which is the nearest one to us; I can easily walk the distance.'

"I hardly know what reply I made, but I said something about my disinclination to ride and force her to walk, and spoke in warm terms of her great kindness in proffering such assistance to an entire stranger. But, without pausing to insist on my taking her horse, her only reply was to ask how she could assist me in mounting. I was soon in her seat, on a side-saddle.

"She was slightly above medium height, and of an elegant figure; had an abundance of soft, glossy chestnut hair, and lustrous brown eyes; altogether she was one of the most beautiful and bewitching creatures I had ever seen. Then, too, there was an ease, composure, and naturalness in her manner and speech which gave me the impression she had been accustomed to good society—certainly much better than could be obtained in that disreputable neighborhood.

"'Did I understand you to say,' she said, after we had made a start, 'that you are a stranger here?'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'not only a stranger, but very—very far from my native land.'

"'You speak, sir, as if you had been a great wanderer,' she said.

"'I am a native of old Scotland,' I replied, 'but left there when a child, and, losing our parents when we were quite young, my only brother and I were educated and lived in Charleston, South Carolina, until we were nearly grown, since when I have travelled much by land and sea, and am now on my way to join that brother—my only living relative,—who is, I suppose, in Illinois, *if alive*.' The words 'if alive' I spoke

before I thought—spoke them with a sad emphasis; and, fearing I had been imprudent, hastened to mend the matter by adding: 'I say "if alive" because I have not heard from him for some time.'

"'I hope,' she kindly replied 'that you will find your brother alive and well. But how strange,' she added, thoughtfully, 'that one born in old Scotland—from which country my grandfather came—should be here in the far West—in this lonely spot!'

"'Ah, strange, indeed!' I replied, and added: 'How little we know whither our footsteps tend. A few years ago I could almost as easily have been persuaded that I would, to-day, be walking among the mountains and valleys of the moon as along this lonely road. And, to me, it seems equally strange that, in this out-of-the-way spot, I should, as I have, come across one like yourself.'

"'Why one like myself?' she artlessly asked.

"'In this wild, wilderness world,' I answered, 'I should have expected to find an illiterate and perhaps uncomely country girl, instead of which I find one—yes, the very reverse in every respect.'

"'Oh,' she replied, with much frankness in her tone and manner, 'for the last four years I have attended a good school in a far-off town, and have thus enjoyed some advantages of which most country girls are unfortunately deprived. Nevertheless, this wild, wilderness world, as you term it, is my home and has many attractions for me, though I often lack for both books and entertaining society. For, unfortunately, ours is what is called, and perhaps justly, a bad neighborhood.'

"Here it came into my mind to trust my secret to my fair companion. I felt sure she was kind, compas-

sionate, and intelligent. But who was she? I knew that I was not far from the residence of the notorious Jim Wilson, and this was perhaps his daughter. If so, did she know or suspect her father's character? Little time, however, remained for reflection, and I felt an almost irresistible impulse to speak out—to speak truly—to tell that young lady, whoever she might be, who I was and what had brought me there.

"'Who lives in the house ahead of us?' I asked.

"'Mr. James Wilson,' she answered.

"'Pardon me, but are you his daughter?' I asked.

"'I am,' she answered.

"I at once checked my horse, and, looking into her face, I slowly and distinctly said: 'Miss Wilson, you have been so kind to me that in your presence I can wear no disguise. I will tell you who I am and why I am here; and, unless your kindness to me and that fair face of yours are but cruel mockeries, you will not only keep my secret, but you will further aid me in a work of love and mercy. And now, Miss Wilson,' I went on without giving her time to reply, 'listen, for I have but a few minutes for explanations; at another time I hope to be able to tell you more.' Then after telling her my name, I gave her a brief sketch of my life, and particularly of the great trouble that had come upon me at the Cave-in-Rock. In conclusion, 'It pains me,' I said, 'to say aught that may possibly distress you—but——"

"'Speak plainly, sir, and have no fears,' she said, interrupting me. And, notwithstanding her apparent effort to speak composedly, her bosom heaved and her voice was tremulous.

"Without hesitation I resumed: 'I was told that the

gang of bad men about the Cave were generally known as Wilson's gang ; and that if I ventured here I would do so at the peril of my life. But my anxiety about my poor brother was so great that I determined to run the risk. My purpose, then, was to seek your father's house ; to represent myself as a poor journeyman saddler—and such I now am—on my way to Illinois ; to plead poverty and ask for employment ; and then obtain information about my brother in any and every way I could. But your kindness, your face, your tones, have changed my plans. Before you, as I have said, I will wear no disguise. And now,' I added, ' you have my secret—my tale of sorrow. And, crippled as I am, I am in your power, but I fear not, and will make no appeal to you. Of your father, I know nothing excepting what comparative strangers have told me ; he may be a bad man—I wish I could think otherwise for your sake,—but you are his daughter, and I cannot ask you to serve me at his expense, or do any violence to your filial obligations. If, however, you can find it in your heart to aid, counsel, or advise me, so that I may find my missing brother, you will confer on me a favor I can never forget, and would repay if in my power.'

" She listened to me with marked attention ; her breathing was at times irregular, and a slight involuntary twitching about her firmly compressed lips and delicate throat showed plainly how greatly she was perturbed. But when I had finished speaking she gave me a look which I can never forget. It assured me I was safe !—that I had made no mistake in trusting *her*. After a short pause, stepping to my side and extending her hand, she said:

"'Your secret is safe with me. My father has ever been an indulgent father to me. If he is, or ever has been, leagued with robbers, I know it not; nor do I believe it. But that he is suspected and shunned, I have had sad proofs; for I have myself been shunned by those of my own age and sex whom I would have sought for friends and companions. Nor have I been blind to the fact that my father is here surrounded by many vicious and bad men, over whom he has a certain control, due, so I have thought, to his mental and physical strength, and his strong and overmastering will. But I deeply deplore your misfortunes; and there is no reason why I should not aid you, if I can, in tracing your brother. What I can do I know not, but I will do my best. But your name, and object in coming here, must not be known. You can tell the tale you intended telling. I will know you only as the stranger whom I found by the roadside. You will be properly cared for, while lame, by my mother. You need fear no evil, unless you should be seen and recognized by some of the men from the Cave, of which, I hope, there is little or no danger. And there is,' she continued, 'a negro man on the farm named Mingo; I will take him into my confidence, for he can best serve me in finding what has become of your brother. Mingo is faithful and very intelligent; and you can trust him implicitly if there is occasion for you to speak to him. I will tell him that he can trust in you, for he is cautious and guarded in conversation with strangers. You will know him when I tell you that he is about thirty years old; rather tall and slim; is very black; has a high, receding forehead—is, in fact, bald nearly to the crown of his head;—and he rarely laughs,

sometimes smiles, but never grins as most negroes do. But now,' she added, 'describe your brother to me, for it may be important that Mingo should know what kind of a looking man he is—his dress, etc.'

"I then described my brother as minutely as I could, after which she said: 'We must now be moving on, it is growing dark, and your sprained ankle should have been attended to before this. But,' she added, 'by what name will you be known?'

"'George McGregor,' I answered. 'And,' I added, 'now, while I can, let me thank you, with all my heart, for your kind words and comforting assurances; but let me add that you must, in trying to serve me, run no personal risk; for if any harm should, in that way, come to you, I should never cease to regret it.'

"'Have no fear on my account,' she replied with emphasis, 'for terrible as my father may be in the eyes of many, to me he is gentle; I am now his only child.'

"On arriving at the yard gate in front of the house, Miss Wilson requested me to keep my seat in the saddle, saying she would send some one to assist me into the house. A few minutes later a negro man came around the corner of the house and approached me, whom I thought to be Mingo, and I was soon sure of it, for—after a knowing look and slight obeisance—he said: 'I sees, sah, it 's your right foot what is lame,' from which I was convinced that Miss Wilson had spoken to him and given him an intimation of my injury. I was carefully assisted by Mingo into the house, and was cordially received by James Wilson and his wife.

"After I was seated, Wilson said: 'My daughter has told us of your accident. We will be glad to do

all we can for you. If you have no objections, I will examine your ankle.' Of course I permitted him to do so. He found it much swollen, but after turning and twisting my foot about a good deal, and causing me much pain, he declared that no bones were broken ; and then, after speaking to his wife aside, he left the room.

" Soon, a negro boy entered, who, by Mrs. Wilson's directions, assisted me to the room assigned me, in a wing back of the main building, and on the ground floor. The entrance to my room was from a wide back porch ; opposite the door was a square window, near which was a small table and one chair, and, in one corner of the room, a very comfortable bed.

" Mrs. Wilson soon entered and said that Mr. Wilson thought my swollen ankle should be bathed at once in cold water ; that it should be bandaged with cold, wet cloths ; and that, when I lay down, if my foot was elevated a little it would pain me less ; to which I assented. Toby, the negro boy, bathed my foot and ankle ; Mrs. Wilson herself bound my ankle in wet cloths ; and when in bed, and my foot slightly elevated on a cushion, I felt comparatively free from pain. Mrs. Wilson, before leaving my room, informed me that my supper would be brought to me ; and that, if I required anything, I was to call out, and would be heard and attended to.

" You have never seen Wilson or his wife ? Well, he is about six feet in height, and of powerful build—a perfect Hercules, I should say, in point of strength ; but he has now grown too corpulent to undergo much fatigue. His head is large and well shaped ; his sandy brown hair, now thin, is turning gray, for he must be

fully fifty years old ; his eyes, of a steel-gray color, are brilliant, and his glance quick and penetrating ; his nose rather short and thick ; his upper lip remarkably long, his mouth large, and his lips full and sensuous. He has a broad, firm, double chin, and his voice is deep and sonorous. I should add that his complexion is very florid, and that he converses fluently. On the whole, when in repose, he gives one the idea of a good-natured, rather than a surly, bull-dog ; but, if aroused, I should say he would be a lion tamer. Mrs. Wilson looked as if she had at one time been a handsome woman, but she was thin, wrinkled, and gray, and her subdued, sad face made her look older than her husband, but she is doubtless a few years younger than he.

" And now here I was, alone and crippled, in the house of the dreaded Jim Wilson. But I did not feel uneasy. I had seen that Wilson was not a devilish monster in appearance ; that, after all, he was but a man, and had a wife, and a kind and beautiful daughter, who had promised to befriend me, and in whom I trusted implicitly. My only uneasiness arose from the ever-recurring question, ' Is poor John alive ? '

" A good supper was sent me, and, after I had finished eating, Wilson came in to see me, and asked me how I was getting along. I told him I was doing finely —that, so long as I was quiet, my ankle gave me very little pain ; and I thanked him for the great kindness shown me. We then entered into a conversation, which lasted perhaps for ten minutes, during which I told him who I was—George McGregor,—where I was from, where I was aiming to go, and so on. He listened to me very attentively, asked me several unimportant questions, and, so far as I could tell, seemed satisfied

with the correctness of my tale and answers. Before he left, I told him of my poverty, and that I would be greatly obliged if he could give me some work to do, in my line—at least enough to pay my board and lodging while I was detained by my lameness,—that I had some tools with me, and thought I would be able, the next day, to do such work as would admit of my sitting down; at the same time mentioning such work as I thought I could do—the repairing of harness, bridles, etc.

"'I think,' he replied, 'I may be able to find you enough work to keep you employed for a week or two,' saying which he bade me good-night and left me.

"I did not sleep much that night. On the following morning, after Toby had waited upon me and brought me my breakfast, Wilson came again to see me; inquired how I had slept, about my foot, etc., and said he would have one of his negro men make me a pair of crutches during the day, which would enable me to hobble around; and that he thought I had better rest another day before I attempted to do any work. His words were certainly kind and considerate, and I thanked him heartily. He then left me.

"That afternoon Miss Wilson came to my door, which was open. It was the first time I had seen her since my admittance into the house. She looked more beautiful than ever, but her face wore a thoughtful and sad expression. She asked how I was; was glad to know I was improving; said I must be as patient as I could; and, as she was about leaving, said in a low voice: 'Mingo will bring you some crutches within an hour or two. He says that *you* should keep very quiet *in the house*, and that *he* will go to work to-night.'

"That face, and the words spoken, gave me food for reflection. She had doubtless suggested to her father that the crutches should be made for me—had planned for Mingo to bring them to me,—had spoken to Mingo of me,—and he would begin work—that is, the search for my brother, that night.

"Presently a negro man appeared with the crutches; it was the same who had assisted me from the horse and into the house; it was my friend Mingo. He was respectful, but not familiar. The crutches were too long—that he had expected,—and with a saw which he had with him he soon made them the required length. They were very well made, of seasoned hickory wood. I tried and found I could get around very well, but my foot, when hanging, pained me very much. I thanked Mingo, and said to him: 'Has your young mistress, Miss Catherine, spoken to you about me?'

"'Yes, sah. She 's tol' me. I 'm goin' ter hunt a little ter night. Ef I ketch enny game, I 'll bring yer some 's soon as I ken.'

"I understood his meaning, and was somewhat astonished at the prudence of his reply and his sagacity in thus furnishing me with a clue to the method by which he proposed to go to work. 'Thank you, Mingo," I replied. 'And I hope the time will come when I can serve you, and your kind young mistress.' He bowed in acknowledgment and withdrew.

"That night, after supper, Wilson again made me a visit. Was glad I was getting along so well, examined my crutches, and said Mingo had made a better job of it than he expected. He then asked me several questions about my past life. I told him I was born in Scotland, but had come to this country—to Charleston

—when quite a small boy. He told me his father had come from Scotland, but had married in this country. I spoke of the old country,—of the ocean,—and gave him a ludicrous account of my sufferings from sea-sickness, at which he laughed quite heartily. I even showed him my testimonial from St. Andrew's,—told him of the organization, its aims, etc. He had heard that St. Andrew was the patron saint of Scotland, and supposed that such societies did a great deal of good. He did not think I would be pleased with the 'rough and tumble' life of the West; but had been told that Scotchmen were a roving race, and could be found in nearly all parts of the earth. In a few words, he seemed disposed to make himself agreeable. On my part, I did my best to entertain him; and, when he left me, after fully an hour's chat, I was satisfied he was in a good humor, for he proposed to send me a whiskey toddy for a 'night-cap,' which he did.

"The next day I had some light work to do for Wilson, and passed the day quietly and more hopefully. In the afternoon Miss Wilson made me another visit, but it was merely to ask as to my condition. That evening I took supper with the family, and a young, awkward countryman, to whom I was not introduced. After the supper the countryman left, and Wilson lit his pipe. We talked for an hour or more, the ladies rarely joining in the conversation, although I made an effort to interest them; they occasionally smiled, or laughed a little, but not heartily as Wilson did. Before retiring Wilson and I had our 'night-cap' of whiskey.

"I had been in my room perhaps an hour when I heard a low tap at my window. I opened it, and Mingo, whose head just reached the sill, was there.

He said, in a low voice : ' Did n't ketch nothin' las' night, but got on a trail ; an' I 'll foller it up.' He then asked : ' Did yer know de young man what tuck supper wif Mahs Jim, or did he know you ? ' ' No,' I said ; ' I never saw him before that I know of, and he did not appear to know me.'

" ' Glad ter hear it. Be keerful,' he replied, moving away.

" Here was another proof of Mingo's sagacity,—an evident warning ! It looked as if persons were to be admitted to the house from day to day to look at me—see if they recognized me as a dangerous person, or spy.

" Within the three following days I think as many as eight or ten persons called to see the ' lame saddler,' and have him do little jobs of mending, etc., for them. They all paid me my moderate charge. I was on my guard, for I was now sure that I was being closely watched ; and I scrutinized each new-comer as closely as I could, fearing I would see one of the men who had arrested me on the flat boat. At last there came one young fellow whom I took to be one of the three who bound me, but I was not certain. He certainly looked at me very closely, but my impression was that he was also in doubt as to my identity.

" In the meanwhile, I had not seen or heard anything from Mingo ; but every day I had received a short visit from Miss Wilson, who had assured me that Mingo was not idle.

" About half an hour after the suspicious young man, to whom I have referred, had left me, Miss Wilson entered my room rather hurriedly, and I saw at once she had something important to communicate. I waited for her to speak. To my surprise the first thing

she said was to ask me if I could 'play on the flute.' I told her I could.

"'Were you playing on the deck of the boat a short while before you were arrested?' she hurriedly asked.

"'I was,' I answered. 'Was playing not an hour before that time.'

"'Did you ever see this instrument?' she asked, almost with a gasp, producing a flute which I had not before observed in her hand.

"'Yes,' I answered, 'that is my flute; and you will find "G. D.," the initials of my name, carved upon the silver band.'

"'That is enough,' she sighed. And then with decision she added: 'I will leave you, but will return again in a few minutes; and you must get ready to leave here as soon as possible.' Saying which, she left the room hurriedly.

"Miss Wilson had placed the flute in my hands, and had left me almost dumfounded. But I soon aroused myself, and, having collected my tools, was ready to depart when she returned. Handing me a note, she said: 'Here is a note from Colonel Andrew Lovell, a gentleman who lives near here. He invites you to come to his house, and you must go, and start quickly. Mingo will, in a few minutes, be at the gate with my pony saddled. He will go with you, show you the way, and bring my pony back. My mother understands that you are going, and no leave-taking is necessary. I will explain your departure to my father. Mingo, as you go, will explain the necessity for your leaving here.'

"'But my bill for board and lodging?' I asked, pulling out what money I had.

"'Keep your money,' she said quickly, and added: 'You owe none in this house. But go now; there is Mingo at the gate, and the pony is ready. No, one moment, stay! I must tell you—and, oh, how glad I am!—that I am now almost sure your brother is alive, and I doubt not we will be able to trace and find him.'

"'But I *must*,' I exclaimed, 'see *you* again! I have much yet——'

"But before I could finish my sentence, she spoke hurriedly, and said: 'Not now, not now! You will see me again.'

"'Until then,' I said, taking her hand in mine and pressing it to my lips, 'good-by; and may God bless you!' and for once my prayer was an earnest one.

"There were tears in her eyes as she replied in a low, tremulous voice: 'Thank you for your prayer; and— good-by, good-by!'

"I took my flute and crutches with me. Mingo assisted me to mount, and, merely saying, 'Foller me,' he walked rapidly back along the road I had passed over. A short distance from the house he left the main road, and, turning to the right, entered what appeared to be a cattle trail; and so rapid was his pace, that the pony had to trot to keep up; but rapid as was his pace, Mingo seemed to see, hear, and note everything around. It was not until we had nearly reached Colonel Lovell's that he slackened his pace and gave me any explanation. He excused himself from answering my question, as to how he had obtained his information, by intimating that if he did so he would be 'br'akin' his word.'

"The substance of the information he gave me was, that he had bought the flute from a young man, and

had given it to Miss Wilson ; that he suspected that young man of being one of those who arrested me on the boat ; that the same man had gone to me, just after dinner, to have some work done ; that he, Mingo, had watched the man, and was sure he had recognized me, and would let ' Mahs Jim ' know who I was ; that he, Mingo, had gone at once to his ' young Missus ' and told her ; that she had, a day or two before, procured the note from Colonel Lovell to be used if required ; that Colonel Lovell was the best, and the bravest, and the ' biggest little man ' he had ever known ; that nobody would harm the Colonel, or me, if I was in his house ; that somehow or other the bad men about the Cave thought if any harm was done the Colonel that all the good men in the county would rise up in arms against them ; that the flat boat I was a passenger on, had gone on down the river the day following its arrival at the Cave, in charge of a new crew from the neighborhood ; that there were carried away in the boat two men, if not more, who were said to be horse thieves, arrested at the Cave, and were to be taken to some town down the river ; that one of those so-called thieves exactly answered to the description of my brother, which I had given to Miss Wilson ; that the other was a red-headed young man, who stammered a little (which description exactly fitted one of Captain Lumley's crew) ; that he, Mingo, was sure the so-called thieves were part of the old crew, and would not be murdered, but put ashore at some safe point ; and that this was all the information so far obtained, but that he would keep hunting, and if he learned more, his young ' Missus ' would let me or Colonel Lovell know as soon as possible. Mingo then asked me if I knew Colonel

Lovell, and when I had answered that I did not, he said the Colonel ' wus mi'ty quiet, but kep' up a heap er thinkin' ; an' 'ill be a true fren' to yer.' In reply to my remark that I thought he had a very kind and handsome young mistress, he said : ' You 's right, sah, 'bout young Missus. Dey don't make 'um enny better 'an her.'

" When we arrived at Colonel Lovell's I pulled from my pocket several dollars in change, which I handed to Mingo, but he shook his head and said : ' No, sah, don't ax no pay,' but picking from my open hand the smallest coin he could find, said, ' but I 'll take dis little one fur luck.' I could only take him by the hand and thank him heartily for what he had done for me.

" After Colonel Lovell had welcomed me into his house, and introduced me to his wife and her sister, Miss Laura Howard,—whom I knew, having been at her father's house several times,—he excused himself, returned to the gate, and remained for half an hour or more in earnest conversation with Mingo.

" Of Colonel Lovell and his wife I need not speak, for you know them. This much, however, I must say for myself : I think there is no better or truer man, and his wife is worthy of him. Of Miss Howard, I would say, her nature can be summed up in the one word—LOVE, and, in its train, a boundless sympathy, and an unselfish desire to serve others. That I speak thus of her, you will understand before my story is ended. But——"

Here Duncan and Adair were interrupted by the entrance of their friends Benton and Holman ; for it was 2 A.M., and they were to sit up during the remain-

der of the night, and let Duncan and Adair get a few hours' sleep.

After exchanging a few words with their friends, Duncan and Adair sought their rooms, but, before separating, the latter said: "Duncan, I have half a mind to make you sit up and finish that story, for you have gotten to an exciting point to me; however, good-night."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Silas Holman—Burial of Hinton Gowan—The Return to Salem—Hardin's Knob and the Rosicrucian—Minerals near Salem—Duncan's Story Resumed—Lovers' Talk.

THE breakfast the following morning, although abundant and well prepared, did not seem to tempt the appetite of either of the six gentlemen who sat around the table; all seemed wrapped in thought, and disinclined to make more than casual remarks and inquiries.

When breakfast was over, Adair and Benton walked out to the bank of the river and took seats on the same bench, under the white-limbed sycamore, where Adair and Holman had sat the evening before. Their conversation soon chanced to turn about Holman.

"I have known Holman long and intimately," said Benton. "I have hunted with him by day and by night; have occasionally heard him talk about supernatural appearances; not as believing or disbelieving in such, but as affording matter for serious consideration. I, also, once heard him express some strange opinions on the subject of his feelings or *impressions*, as affording him a surer guide, in most matters, than

his reason. I replied to him that what he called his 'impressions' were more often perhaps than he supposed derived from the operation of his reasoning faculties; for that he does, after his own fashion, think and reason a good deal is evident to any one who will watch him, and listen attentively to his conversation."

"Yes," replied Adair. "And I have, of course, known Holman ever since I came to Salem; but, being no hunter, I have never known him intimately—have, in fact, only known him casually as a hunter and fiddler, but since we left town I have talked more with him, and have observed him more attentively than ever before; and, I confess, he is quite a different character from what I supposed. I doubt not his seeming peculiarity, at times, so far from being assumed, is entirely natural, that however peculiar his views may be, they are honestly entertained; and I fully agree with you that he is a thoughtful man, and, withal, one of a kindly and sympathetic nature."

"Oh, yes, there 's no sham about Silas," responded Benton, "and he 's a good-hearted fellow. There are but few persons to whom he is much attached, or with whom he converses freely, but those few he will stand by through thick and thin. As a rule, he seems to prefer animals for companions rather than men, and he seems to possess a strange power over them. For instance, I know that he is not afraid of the largest and fiercest dog,—that he has approached such, an entire stranger, and not only made friends with them in a few minutes, but remained as an old acquaintance. I have also seen him go to a blacksmith shop, when a restless and vicious horse was being shod and calm him as no one else could. His wife was, for some years

before she died, in very delicate health, and he was unusually kind and attentive to her. Since her death, his sister—the eccentric Miss Jane—has lived with him and kindly cared for his pretty little daughter Susan. But year by year Silas is becoming more of a recluse."

A few hours later the mortal remains of Hinton Gowan, dressed in his best suit of black cloth, were gently lifted from his bed, and placed in the coffin of dressed and varnished cherry wood. The lid was then placed on,—the face forever hid,—and then, without an audible word having been spoken, the slow procession started; the coffin borne on hand-spikes by six white men; some twelve or fifteen negroes, old and young of both sexes, following; all going to that lonely graveyard in the forest, where a grave had been dug by the negroes under the supervision of old Jim.

Slowly and silently the coffin was lowered, and the dead man was separated only by a plank or two and a thin partition of earth from the mouldering remains of his first wife and his mother. The grave was then filled, smoothed, and patted down. Then there was a pause, and Holman, to the surprise of every one, began singing, in his deep-toned but melodious voice, that old and familiar hymn, beginning:

> "Hark! From the tomb a doleful sound;
> Mine ears, attend the cry!
> Come, living men, and view the ground
> Where you must shortly lie."

As the singing progressed, Holman was joined by several of the gentlemen present, and by nearly all of the adult negroes. The hymn ended, all felt that this slight measure of respect to the memory of the departed

was appropriate. Then, with quiet almost unbroken, the gentlemen returned to the house, the negroes following behind. All was over.

Adair and his companions soon ordered their horses brought out. After a few encouraging words, and bidding a kindly good-by to old Jim, Hannah, and Sophy,—who were outspoken in their expressions of regret at seeing " yous kin' gen'men go 'way " ; and after a few parting words with Mr. Hawley and Doctor Clayton, Adair and his party mounted their horses and rode away.

The return journey was rather a rapid one, for the four men had been away from home longer than they expected. The afternoon was far advanced when the party reached the top of Champion's hill, and caught sight of Salem in the distance. The attention of all was at once arrested by the rays of the setting sun reflected from the windows of the Court House, which made the building look as if its interior was a mass of flames.

When at a point in the valley from which a view could be obtained of Hardin's knob, some three miles off to the northwest, there hung around its peak a thin veil of mist, and Holman, pointing this out to Adair, said :

" Some years ago there lived over in the valley near the knob an old and lonely German widower, who often sat at the door of his little cabin and looked out upon that knob ; and it was an idea of his that such a veil as now hangs around its peak was not misty clouds, but smoke that ascended from a deep and unexplored cave near the base of the knob ; and that the smoke was from fires kindled down below by gnomes, who

guard the treasures of minerals in all these hills around."

"A Rosicrucian, I presume," said Adair. "But, tell me, do you suppose there are such treasures in these surrounding hills?"

"Yes," Holman answered. "I know a spot not three miles from here, and on this side of Lowdy's Creek, where lead can be obtained, near the surface, so pure that old hunters, before there were stores where lead could be bought, used to dig it up, melt it in a common ladle, and mould it into bullets."

"But here we are nearly home," said Adair, "and before we part I would like to know if you do not think it better to wait until to-morrow before showing Benton that strange note signed 'H. G.' For he sat up a good portion of last night, and, after his ride, no doubt requires a night's good rest; and I fear the note would disturb him."

"Certain to," replied Holman, "and to-morrow will be soon enough. I hope he will heed the warning. He should do so."

"I will say nothing to him," said Adair, "of our conversation regarding the note. He will no doubt talk with you on the subject, and you can then give him your views about the matter, which, I am sure, will have weight with him."

"But now, boys," said Adair, addressing his three friends as they rode into town, "I had to treat you all before starting out on this trip; and, as I have to thank you all for remaining and returning with me, as well as for your voluntary services, I will, unless Benton objects, invite you all to ride with me to the Brick Hotel, and we will have another drink."

"What I do object to—and seriously object to," said Benton, "is to be considered as a possible objector to a proposition made under such unobjectionable conditions. Besides, I will require a little extra inspiration to enable me fitly to describe to a gaping crowd—— But, no, hang me if I do anything of the kind! There was no fun in it; and you other fellows may do all the talking about our trip."

By the time the four horsemen dismounted, several townsmen had gathered around, and reported that Rudolph and Coffield had arrived safely the evening before, and that Walter Gowan was safe in jail.

When in the bar-room an invitation to "step up" was extended to all present, and all of them "believed they would," and all of them took "somethin'" with "sugar in it." Then, there were many questions asked, and rather hurried answers given by our four friends; for, somehow or other, notwithstanding the liquor, they did n't feel like talking then. "Another time," they said, and soon the crowd dispersed.

Adair, as he walked from the room with Duncan, said: "I must now go and see sister and the children, but after supper I will come down to the shop, and, if you are not too much fatigued by your ride and your loss of sleep last night, I would like to hear the conclusion of your story."

"All right!" responded Duncan. "I am anxious to resume, for I have yet to come to *the* point, about which I want your opinion and advice."

When Duncan and Adair were alone in the latter's room over the shop:

"Well," said Duncan, on resuming his story, "I left off where Colonel Lovell, having left me with the

ladies, was engaged in an earnest conversation with Mingo.

"On the Colonel's return to the house he asked me, in the presence of the ladies, if I had received a note from him, and, on receiving an affirmative answer, said: 'Then I must explain to you that I received a note from Miss Wilson, by the hand of Mingo, requesting me to write to you as I did; and saying that you were in some danger, and that Mingo would explain. I then learned of Mingo's efforts to serve you, by his young mistress' command. And no one, I think, could serve you better, for he is sagacious, faithful, and untiring. We are glad to serve Miss Wilson, whom we esteem, and glad to give you shelter and protection and aid so far as we can.'

"I at once saw that there were no secrets in that household, and that the wife and sister-in-law were expected to hear any explanations I desired to make. I did not hesitate, after presenting the note of introduction Squire Howard had given me, to tell so much of my story as I thought necessary or of interest to them, and especially did I dwell upon the part Miss Wilson had enacted. The ladies appeared deeply interested, and the Colonel was an attentive listener. He thanked me 'for speaking so freely'; asked me a few leading questions about the men I had come in contact with at the Cave and at Wilson's house; and congratulated me on having taken Miss Wilson into my confidence, as otherwise my plan of operations would probably not only have been useless but hazardous. He concluded by saying, he hoped and believed my brother was alive and would be found, and that he would try to aid me.

"The Colonel was so quiet and undemonstrative in his few words that I could but wonder if it were true that the man before me had ever been, as I had heard, a soldier noted for his daring and intrepidity—the one man who, in that neighborhood of outlaws, could afford me protection. After supper I had an hour or two of pleasant conversation with the Colonel and the ladies; and then—just before bedtime—came family prayers. First, the Colonel read, very impressively, a chapter from the Bible, then a hymn was sung—and sung so sweetly, so feelingly, by Miss Howard, that I was astonished and enraptured by turns; never heard I more entrancing melody, and the words seemed exactly adapted to cheer me in my desolate condition. The hymn ended, a short and simple prayer was offered up by the Colonel. It did not sound like an ordinary prayer, but as if he, Andrew Lovell, was standing face to face with his heavenly Father and thanking Him plainly and earnestly for past blessings, and asking for protection and guidance for the future—for all of us, for me, for my brother, for all who were in trouble. And hardened sinner though I have been and am, the memory of the worship around that family altar often comes to me like the echo of my dead mother's prayer for her living son.

"Three days passed away. Each day the Colonel was absent from home most of the day. He came and went and said little; but his wife—brimming over with love and confidence in her husband—several times said to me, 'Andrew is at work for you,' as if that were sufficient to satisfy any reasonable mortal that all was being done that human agency could accomplish.

"On the morning of the fourth day, about an hour

after an early breakfast, Miss Wilson was seen riding rapidly down the road. The ladies, the Colonel, and I went out to the gate to meet her. There was a hurried hand-shaking, and Miss Wilson was introduced to Miss Howard, whom she had never met before. Miss Wilson soon took Colonel Lovell's arm, and as they walked towards the house were for a few minutes in earnest conversation, at the close of which the Colonel's face lit up a little, and he turned to us and said :

" ' Kitty has come to tell me that Ben Cain, one of the crew who went down on the flat boat, has returned home, has the chills again, and is very sick ; so Mingo learned last night. And, Harriet '—addressing his wife, —' get me my small case of medicines, and I will ride over to see Ben.'

" After the Colonel had left, Mrs. Lovell told me that, once before, this Ben Cain, who had a bad character, was very ill, and in want not only of medicine but of food for himself and family ; that ' Andrew ' had supplied his wants and had assisted in nursing the man ; and that she had no doubt Ben could and would tell ' Andrew ' where the prisoners on the flat boat were landed.

" When Mrs. Lovell had finished speaking, Miss Howard threw her arm around Miss Wilson, and saying, ' Come with me,' led her away. When they had left the room Mrs. Lovell, with an animated smile, said to me : ' Kitty will find a sympathetic friend in Laura, and soon learn to trust and love her.' And truer prediction was never uttered, as I can testify, for I have since had abundant proofs.

" An hour later I saw the two young ladies walking side by side, each with an arm around the other's waist,

up and down a little path in the forest close to the house. It was a glorious November day, the glare of the sun softened and subdued by the hazy atmosphere which seemed to have fallen asleep; the forest trees were parting, one by one, with their wealth of leaves, but those that still clung to the parent stem were in holiday attire—displaying every color that could be extracted from a ray of light, and every tinge that could be imparted by wind and weather. But the love and sympathy that were in the hearts of those guileless girls, as they walked to and fro along that forest path, were flowers of richer hue than ever grew on tree, or shrub, or vine.

"Soon after the return of the young ladies to the house, Miss Howard entered the room, where I was seated, and said: 'Mr. Duncan, Miss Wilson wishes to have some conversation with you before she leaves; will you walk into the next room where she is?'

"Need I tell you, Adair, that I arose to follow Miss Howard with a sensation about my heart I had felt once before, but in a milder form—for then, it had come upon me by such slow and gentle stages, that I was scarcely aware of its presence until it was revealed to me by the pang of separation—but now, it had come with almost an overmastering rush, and I felt dizzy and tremulous as I entered the room where Miss Wilson was seated near a window and alone.

"As I entered she arose slowly, and evidently with some embarrassment in her manner; but, extending her hand, she asked me to be seated. She was the first to speak, and, in a faltering voice, said: 'Mr. Duncan, I have been glad to learn of your rapid recovery. Colonel Lovell has told you where he is going.

I believe his mission will be successful, and that he will learn where your brother was landed. If so, you will doubtless leave here at once. I may, therefore, never see you again.' And her lips quivered as she said this, but, with an effort, she resumed with some composure. 'What part,' she said, 'if any, my father may have had in causing you such loss, trouble, and anxiety, I know not. You can perhaps only think of him with distrust, suspicion, perhaps anger. But I would beg you not to visit the reputed sins of the father upon the daughter. I thank you for the confidence you reposed in me when you first met me. I was sorry for you; admired the love and courage that induced you to risk your life to find your brother, and I have, so far, done all I could to aid you. But I would do more. You have been robbed, and are nearly penniless—have a journey before you, and how long and costly it may be none can tell. Besides, you may find your brother in want, and, therefore, take this' (holding out a purse); 'and that you may find your brother; that peace and contentment may be your portion in this life is, and ever will be, my sincere desire. And now,' she added, rising from her seat, 'I must bid you——'

"'No,' said I, rising from my seat, and holding the purse in my hand, 'not yet—sit down. Now hold this purse,' I said, placing it in her lap, 'and hear what *I* have to say. I have told you who and what I am, and all I have told you is true. There is, however, *one* thing more I wish to tell you before I go; for if, as you think, Colonel Lovell is successful in his mission, love and duty command me to make all haste to find my brother, for he, too, suffers, not knowing what has befallen me. Then, too, life is,

at best, uncertain, and it may so happen that I can never see you again. Our most earnest efforts may be unavailing. The *one* thing, to which I have referred, is this ! When I was an orphan boy, I found a good home where there was but one child, a sweet little girl, one year younger than myself. We played and studied and grew up together, until she was blooming into womanhood. Then death entered that household, and the father was taken away. Soon the widowed mother prepared to return, with her daughter, to old Scotland, her native land. When about to be parted, dear Jennie and I discovered how much we loved each other. Our troth was plighted. I went earnestly to work, hoping, that by the time I had arrived at man's estate, I would be able to go to my native land, claim my bonnie bride, and bring her back with me. But, again, fell death divided us. There came to me a letter ; it told of a cold, a cough, and then a quick consumption ; that the bonnie lass I loved so well had gone to join her father. Of my sorrow I would not speak. Three years have since elapsed. You have asked me not to visit the reputed sins of the father upon the daughter, and have thanked me for the confidence reposed in you when first we met. And now, when about to *part*, I would again show my confidence in you, by declaring that not only will I not visit the reputed sins of the father upon the daughter, but with a warmth, an ardor, that surprises myself, *I—love—that—daughter.* But listen ! You must not mistake me ! I am, as you have surmised, poor ; and have a long journey before me, that will take me I know not where, nor how long. It may be years, and it may never be that I can offer a *home* to her I love, without which, I would not, in ordi-

nary circumstances, let my love be known. But you have told me of your isolation, and all the sympathy in my nature went out to you ; and your great kindness to me, your face, your mind, and your heart have completed the work, and—won—my—love ! It may, therefore, cheer and comfort you to know that, as you have won one heart, be it ever so poor and humble, so you may win others, and the future prove much brighter than you have perhaps hoped for. I neither ask nor expect you to love me, for it would be unwise for you to centre your love, if you could, upon a stranger and so poor a wanderer as you know me to be. And now, as regards your purse ! I honor the motive which induced you to offer me assistance ; but I am young and strong, and so is my brother ; and, therefore, I neither require nor can I accept it, for I have had proofs enough of your kindness.'

" Miss Wilson remained seated while I spoke, scarcely moved, and, with her face averted, uttered no sound. When I ended, she slowly arose and looked up at me. There were traces of tears, her face was pale, her lips tightly compressed, her bosom heaving. It was several moments before she spoke, and then, slowly and with great earnestness, she asked :

" ' And can you love the daughter of such a man as you have had reason to think my father to be ? '

" ' It is no longer a question of can I, for, as I have told you, I do love her.'

" ' Would you prefer to have your love returned by esteem and admiration, or by a love—sincere ? '

" ' By a love—sincere, if I could but protect and defend so great a treasure.'

" ' But if I offered to protect that treasure by garner-

ing it in my own heart until you choose to come and claim it ? '

" ' Then I would labor earnestly to speed the day when I might come and take the treasure into my own keeping.'

" ' But if an angry father should say that I should *not* give up that treasure into your keeping ? '

" ' It would then be for you to give it up, or withhold it from *me*, as you might elect.'

" ' But if you received not the treasure on demand, would you not feel that I had wronged you ? '

" ' That I would deeply regret my loss is certain ; but I could never think of you as withholding what was mine by right, but only as retaining that which was your own to give or keep.'

" ' But such a treasure linked to such a name as mine ! Have you thought of it ? Might it not prove a sore burden and drag you down, although intended for your support ? '

" ' My name would be your new name, and love can never prove a burden to drag one down.'

" ' Then, in return for the confidence you have *twice* reposed in me, I would show *my* confidence in *you* by declaring that my heart—my love—are yours—and *only yours*. And, oh, listen ! ' she exclaimed, and her voice and mien were intensely earnest and pathetic, ' I have so longed—and, would you believe it, even prayed—for some one to love and to love me ! Some one in whom I could trust and confide ; and, when I first saw you—when you told me, a stranger, and the daughter of the man you had reason to suspect and dread, *your secret*, from that moment *I loved you*, but—without—hope. But oh ! how—how bright this day has been ! I am now sure we can trace and find your

brother ; and I have found a friend—a tender, sympathetic female friend of my own age, who whispered to me such words of hope and comfort ! But for her I should not have sought this interview, but should have shunned you—should have mounted my horse, waved you an adieu, and gone back to a life of doubt, distrust, and misery. And then ! to find that you, an honest, brave, and kind-hearted man, love *me !* Oh, George Duncan ! '

" But further is sacred ground. It is enough to say we arranged to correspond. My letters to Miss Wilson were to be sent under cover to Miss Laura Howard, and thence through Mrs. Lovell to their destination.

" Colonel Lovell was successful. He found out that my brother was landed, in good health, near the mouth of the Ohio, and was supposed to have gone to St. Louis. Early the next morning, I bade good-by to my kind friends—the Colonel and his wife, and Miss Howard—and left for Smithland. Finding no letters there for me, I went on to Fort Massac, on a flat boat, and from there walked to St. Louis. After a short search I found my brother. The meeting between us I leave you to imagine. He told me he thought Captain Lumley had been murdered, but that the other four men of our boat's crew had been spared ; that the stammering companion who was on the boat, a prisoner with himself, was still detained on board when he, John, was put ashore ; that, before leaving the Cave, he had been told that no harm had been done me ; and that, having been released where he was, he made his way to St. Louis hoping to find me there.

" We soon found employment in St. Louis ; I at my trade, and John with a large dealer in furs, a Mr.

Benoist. We worked hard for a year ; and Mr. Benoist was so much pleased with John that he not only consented to give him the hand of his beautiful daughter in marriage, but he admitted him as a partner in the business. John offered me employment and assistance, but I was bent on returning here.

" I wrote to Miss Wilson as soon as I had found my brother. Three months elapsed before I received her answer. Her letter was all I could desire, being well written, frank and affectionate. She told me that her father had recently been very anxious and depressed ; that several men, supposed to be members of the reputed gang, had become alarmed, and had moved away or had mysteriously disappeared ; that her father had, she thought, found out a good deal about me, and attributed to me and my friends the fresh suspicions which had been aroused against himself ; that if, in his present temper, he should find out her love for me it might go hard with her, but that she had no fears and would face any danger for my sake ; that she would advise me to remain away for some time ; and, finally, that now that she knew my address she would write as often as she could. In a postscript she wrote : ' Our good friends, the Colonel and his wife, are well ; and the more I know of Laura the more I admire and love her. How I bless the day I first met the dear girl! and on that same blessed day you told me and I told you—(we know).'

Here Duncan was interrupted by a knock at the door ; and Adair, on answering it, found Mr. Henry Rudolph seeking admission. After a few words had passed between Adair and his visitor, the former said, " Keep your seat, Duncan, I will be back in a few minutes," and, closing the door, went out with Rudolph.

CHAPTER XIX.

Duncan's Story Ended—Adair Questions Duncan about Rudolph—Duncan Volunteers Advice—Duncan and Billy Wilmot—Adair's Confession to Duncan—Adair and the Lion's Den.

ADAIR was absent from his room longer than he expected, and on re-entering he said to Duncan : "I am sorry we were interrupted. Rudolph detained me longer than I supposed he would ; but now, on with the story."

"My story," Duncan replied, "is about at a close. It only remains for me to tell you that, a few weeks before you came to Salem, I returned here a comparative stranger to every one excepting Squire Howard and his family, to whom I am indebted for unvarying kindness. Since my return I have seen Miss Wilson thrice : twice at the residence of Colonel Lovell, and once at that of Squire Howard ; where she was, for several days, on a visit to her friend, Miss Laura. The more I have seen of Miss Wilson the more I respect, admire, and love her. She is indeed a good and true woman. We are engaged to be married. Since you admitted me as a partner, we have done well in our business, and now, thanks to you, I feel that I am able to maintain a wife. I wish to make my

brother and his wife a short visit; and, as soon as possible after my return, to offer my Kitty not only a heart but a home."

"Amen!" ejaculated Adair. "And, first, I congratulate you on having won the heart of such a woman. I, further, approve your purpose to marry as soon as possible, and you may count on my assistance in any and every possible way, if required. And now as to your story. It has interested me greatly: not only so far as it related to your early life and love, to your brother, to Wilson, to your adventures, and especially to your Kitty, but it strangely wound itself around until it embraced the two families—those of Squire Howard and Colonel Lovell—with whom I have been more intimately associated than any others in this county, and for whom I have a warmer regard than for almost any others on earth. And not only so, but you have favorably mentioned the negro man Mingo, the husband of my cook, Viney, both of whom have soon to be sold; and Viney has been at me to buy not only her, but Mingo, whom I have never seen."

"Buy them, Adair, buy them by all means!" said Duncan. "Such servants would be a treasure for any man to be proud of. Not only would you be bringing a husband and wife together, but *I* am deeply interested in Mingo—deeply indebted to him, as I have told you; and I certainly think him the most prudent, faithful, and intelligent negro I have ever known. If you do not feel able to make such a purchase, count on me for my 'pile,' for what I have is at your service. Besides, your credit is now so established that you can easily borrow money from any of our rich farmer friends at six per cent. interest, and Mingo and Viney would pay

you more than double that on their cost. But how comes it that Mingo is for sale?" he anxiously asked, for he was thinking of the faithful servant Miss Wilson would lose.

"Viney tells me," answered Adair, "that Mingo does not, as you have supposed, belong to Jim Wilson, but to the estate of a son of his, Penn Wilson, who recently died, and hence Mingo has to be sold. I had almost made up my mind to buy both Mingo and Viney, but now, after what you have told me, I will no longer hesitate, and will do so as soon as I can. And, I 'm sure, when I tell Viney about it, her spectacles will be so bedimmed that she will have to rub them very often. She is a good servant, and it will afford me real pleasure to see her and Mingo together."

"And now, Adair," said Duncan, "about this trip of mine to see my brother! Green has been unfortunate in his speculations in 'yearlings,' and his farming operations having proven nearly a failure, he is, so he says, about 'strapped,' and he wants us to give him employment. What think you of getting him to take my place while I am away?"

"Green will doubtless do very well," answered Adair, "and it would, I think, be almost a charity to give him employment; however, I leave this entirely to you. But, Duncan, reverting to your story, do you hope to obtain Wilson's consent to your marrying his daughter? And if not, how do you propose to overcome the difficulty?"

"I have some hope," Duncan answered, "that the old man will give his consent. Whatever else he may be, he is fond, yea, even proud, of his daughter; and, since he seems to regard his life as in jeopardy, he is

doubtless anxious to see his daughter married. He may be prejudiced against me, but I trust to his daughter's powers of persuasion and influence over him to surmount this difficulty. In the event of his positive opposition, I have no plan matured; it will be time enough for this when I return, and after consultation with Miss Wilson, for she is the one to decide the matter. In any event, I will want you, Adair, to stand by me—be my best man when the marriage takes place. If we are unopposed, and can have such a wedding as we hope for, I know that Miss Wilson will desire to have Miss Laura Howard as her bridesmaid. And I suppose," Duncan added with a pleasant smile, and a rather quizzical look, "you would have no objections to standing up with Miss Howard?"

"Oh, I 'm at your service," answered Adair, with the slightest perceptible embarrassment, "bridesmaid or no bridesmaid. Of course I would be delighted to have Miss Howard for my partner, *provided* it would be agreeable to her, in supporting you and your Kitty through the trying ordeal."

"That it will be agreeable to Miss Howard I 'll guarantee," replied Duncan, emphatically.

"By the bye, Duncan," said Adair, "how comes it that you have known the Howards so well, and yet the fact remain a secret to me until now?"

"Easily enough explained," responded Duncan. "I requested them to keep my secret, which they have done, and I have delayed mentioning the 'fact' until I could tell you 'my story' in full, and give you all the whys and wherefores. Besides, Adair, you are by no means an inquisitive man. You never, I believe, ask questions, as many do, for the mere purpose of

learning about other people's affairs. Many persons come to you and tell you their 'stories,' as I have done, but it 's because they want your advice or assistance ; and thus you are, I have sometimes feared, somewhat burdened with other people's troubles, and don't look out sharp enough for number one—yourself—in some matters."

"Out with it, Duncan," said Adair, jocularly, "out with it ! I 'm sure you want to say something to me that you fear will be disagreeable, but never mind that. You 've complimented me more than I deserve ; and I 'm now ready for a scolding."

"Well, I 'll tell you what it is," replied Duncan. "It is n't exactly a scolding I want to give you, but I want to volunteer a little advice. The preachers give their congregations good advice on Sundays, but the laity can sometimes give them good advice on week days. I have sometimes thought that the more competent a man is to advise others, the more he stands in need of advice himself. How do I make that out? Well, you see, a good adviser must not only be clear-headed, but impartial and unselfish. Now the impartial and unselfish man is the broad lover of humanity, whose motto is 'even and exact justice to all' ; and he, of all men, is most likely to take an exaggerated view of the duties and obligations he owes to others, and in a corresponding ratio to overlook or neglect what he thinks exclusively concerns himself. The short of it is, such a man sees well for others, but is rather blind as regards himself ; he would heal other people's maladies, and let his own run on—neglect it until it is possibly too late."

"That," said Adair, with a broad smile," was very

well done ! It is what, I suppose, might be called a metaphysical disquisition, or something of that sort. But I will wait to see what you are driving at—the personal application you intend making—before I attempt an answer."

"Now, look here, Adair," said Duncan, "I know that you now have no less than three bad 'cases' on hand, and perhaps more. Three cases of men who are in love and want to get married—and that means six afflicted people, for there are likewise three women concerned. There 's Brantley, and Benton, and your humble servant ; and you are trying, or will try to help all of us ; and, although it is high time you were attending to your own case, you are, I fear, neglecting it."

"In the first place," said Adair, "tell me why you suppose me to know anything about Brantley's or Benton's love affairs."

"That 's soon told," answered Duncan, laughingly. "Billy Wilmot was in town one night last week ; and he wanted some music ; and as Holman's left hand happened to be so crippled that he could not finger the strings of his fiddle, the two cronies came to see me ; and Billy on his fiddle, and I on my flute, soon went at it. Of course, to wet my whistle and to rosin Billy's bow, we had to have a 'wee drap o' whuskey,' and it was n't long before the music—not the whuskey—'sae ream'd in Billy's noddle' that, after asking me if I knew when Brantley would return, he was gracious enough to tell me of Brantley having addressed his sister,—and that you were, at the joint request of his sister and Brantley, investigating the latter's character and antecedents. As for Benton, I have long known of his

hankering after Miss Ritchie ; and a few days ago he told me he thought of getting married soon after her return ; that he had talked freely with you on the subject, and that you had advised him to do so, and so on."

"That 's all right then," replied Adair. "I, of course, am not at liberty to repeat anything told me in confidence, but I am glad to find that both of these 'cases' are known to you, for now I can talk with you about them. And, first, as to Brantley's case. Do you know anything to his prejudice beyond what was generally known of him when here? and have you heard any talk of his returning here?"

"As you know," answered Duncan, "I am rather addicted to sitting on the benches over in front of the Brick Hotel, where the boys most do congregate after dark, and of listening to their gab ; and I never heard anything against Brantley beyond what every one knew. In fact, the more I knew of him the better I liked him. As to his return, I have often heard the matter talked about. Some think he was so smitten with Miss Wilmot that he is likely to come back ; others, that he was only flirting with her ; and a few that she rejected him, and consequently that he will never return. Henry Rudolph has, apparently, been anxious to know about Brantley's return, and it is even reported that he has been trying to find out through Miss Howard and Miss Wilmot. He has certainly visited Miss Howard quite frequently of late."

"Excuse me, Duncan, for questioning you so closely," said Adair. "It is not an idle curiosity that induces me to do so, but a desire for information that may serve a good purpose, and of which I may inform

you before we are through. My next question, then, is: Why is Rudolph so anxious to know about Brantley's return? What is supposed to be the reason?"

"That very question," Duncan answered, "was asked Rudolph by Jim Catron a few evenings ago. Catron is, as you know, a cool, long-headed lawyer for so young a man, and he has the reputation of asking questions for a *purpose*, and of noting and remembering the answers; which makes some people rather nervous when he questions them. Rudolph was, I thought, somewhat embarrassed on the occasion I refer to. He, however, replied that he was by no means anxious about the matter; that it was idle curiosity more than anything else which induced him to make the inquiry; that Brantley had, when here, been the life and soul of the town so far as sports and amusements were concerned; and that, really, everybody seemed to miss him. 'I do for one,' replied Catron, 'but,' he continued, looking straight at Rudolph, 'I thought you were by no means an advocate of such sports and amusements as Brantley did so much to foster.' At which the crowd rather chuckled, and added to Rudolph's discomfort. Rudolph, as you doubtless know, is very jealous of his reputation, and yet there is more of the born gambler in him than in Brantley; and he is so covetous and avaricious that it is hard for him to keep in due bounds and maintain his immaculate reputation."

"And, next," said Adair, "what about these visits of Rudolph's to Miss Howard? Surely his object could not have been to obtain information from her, or, through her, from Miss Wilmot, as to Brantley's probable return!"

"No, I agree with you," replied Duncan. "And my own impression is that he is wooing Miss Howard."

"The devil he is!" exclaimed Adair; but, checking himself, he added: "But, surely, *she* has too much sense—too much heart, to have that man! Besides, she is—at least, I have supposed her to be—engaged to Warren Davidson."

Duncan had long known of Adair's intimacy in boyhood with the Howard family, for Adair had spoken of it to him. He further knew of Adair's frequent mention of the name of 'Laura' when, during his illness, he was delirious from fever; of his visit to the Squire's when convalescent; and of his admitted great attachment to the family. And now, his sudden exclamation and intense earnestness convinced him that Adair, as he had long suspected, secretly loved Miss Laura Howard, and that her rumored engagement to Warren Davidson was the secret of his reticence.

"That Warren Davidson has been a suitor for her hand," Duncan replied, after a pause of some moments, "is well known; but, it is believed that she has steadily declined his advances, much to the surprise of many; for Davidson is generally considered what is called a 'good catch.' It is thought, however, that he is now sitting up to a rich lady down South. And, believing Davidson now out of the way, Rudolph has, I believe, addressed Miss Howard *or intends doing so.* And I, for one, would be exceedingly sorry should he succeed in his suit. To see such a charming, unselfish, warm-hearted young lady wedded to such a cold, selfish man would be too bad! And yet it is by no means certain that he will not succeed, for he is good-looking, rich, highly connected, a seeming model of propriety, shrewd,

scheming, and well calculated to deceive any young lady as to his true character."

If Duncan had studied and carefully prepared his words to arouse his friend, he could scarcely have been more successful, for no sooner had he spoken than with a hard-set, determined face, and a peculiar and striking emphasis, both of tone and gesture, Adair said: "Duncan, this thing *must* NOT be. Rudolph is not only a cold and selfish man; he is worse! He is, I have good reason to believe, a *thief!* You are startled, I see; so was I when almost positive proof of it came to my knowledge a short time ago. The time has not yet come to make known the facts. Brantley will, I believe, soon be here, and the indictment, if such there is to be, will rest with him. Rudolph doubtless believes himself unsuspected, and certainly has not the slightest suspicion that I have proof of his guilt in my possession. I have recently avoided his company as much as I well could, but, when with him, have treated him with ordinary politeness, not wishing to arouse his suspicion or put him on his guard. He is, however, conscious of his guilt; and it is *this*, and nothing else, that makes him so anxious to know about Brantley's return. And now," he added, "the time and the occasion have come for me to tell you the secret—of—*my love*, and—of—*my life!*"

And tell it he did. Duncan was an absorbed listener; for Adair spoke with an earnestness and emphasis that not only surprised but, at times, almost awed his friend. He told, as on a former occasion he had told his friend Benton, of his strange attachment for Laura Howard, as a child; of his long search to find her; of his increasing admiration and love for her; of

his silence, enforced by his poverty; of how he had learned of her almost undoubted engagement to Warren Davidson; of the weighty and bounden duties that had recently devolved upon him; and that, after long and earnest consideration, he had resolved to keep silent and remain unmarried. In conclusion, he said: "I am sure Miss Laura and every member of the Squire's family have a warm regard for me. I have had too many proofs to doubt this. But I have no reason to believe that Miss Laura ever loved me; on the contrary, she has rather appeared to shun me. I have thought that she suspected and feared I would make some declaration of my love, and has wished to spare me the pain and humiliation of such an answer as she would be forced to give me. But," he went on with greater vehemence, and, in his excitement, rising from his seat, "while I must keep my secret from her—and while I could, with some degree of composure, see her become the wife of such a man as I suppose Warren Davidson to be, yet, I cannot stand quietly by and see one I love so well sacrificed by becoming the wife of such a man as Rudolph. But the question now is, supposing she is not engaged to Warren Davidson, what should be done to guard her against Rudolph? for that she—pure-hearted as she is—would accept him, if she knew his true character, is not for a moment to be supposed."

Duncan was silent for some moments; at last he said: "Much of what you have just told me is little more than what I have long suspected. It has seemed to me so natural—favored as you have so often been with the society of such a young lady as Miss Howard—that you should not only have admired but loved

her. But, that you should have loved her even in childhood—that you should have retained her image in your heart through so many years, and that now, when her image has become a part and parcel of your very life, it does surprise and pain me to know that you will thus sacrifice yourself—submit to this *living death* in obedience to what you conceive to be your duty to *others*. No law, human or divine, requires such a sacrifice at our hands. If Miss Howard is engaged to Warren Davidson, or any one else, or loves you not, it is better to know the truth at once, and then apply the remedies, if such may be found ; but don't let the case drag on in doubt and uncertainty, for every day that passes makes it more difficult to cure. That Miss Howard should not have *shown* her love for you does not surprise me, for she is as modest as she is beautiful ; and a true lady is ever timid and reserved in the presence of the man she loves, so long as she has reason to doubt his love for her. Do away with her doubt upon that point, and her timidity will give place to an all-absorbing trustfulness and confidence. That she would turn from Rudolph with loathing, if she knew his true character, is certain ; and that she should know it, and that *quickly*, is but right—a duty some one should perform."

"I need not tell you, Duncan," replied Adair, "that what you have said shall have my most thoughtful consideration. But, many and many a time have I argued this case, my inclinations taking one side and my sense of duty the other, and on every occasion I have arrived at the same conclusion : to—keep—silent ! Besides, I have an abiding faith that, however much our duties may harass or even pain us, it will, in the

long run, be best for us not to waver in their performance. And, now, as Rudolph's true character is best known to me—as I alone have evidence of his offence,—it would seem that I should warn Miss Laura, but, in the circumstances, this is a duty I cannot personally perform. How can this best be managed?"

"Before leaving here to visit my brother," Duncan answered, "I wish to see Miss Wilson again, and, in order to do so, I must first visit and confer, as on former occasions, with Miss Howard. I can, and will, if you so desire, tell her all that is necessary, but as it is rather delicate work, and would appear to be coming less directly from yourself, it would perhaps be better if the information could be conveyed through some discreet female friend. Miss Wilson would be the very person, but I fear it would be too long before she could see Miss Howard."

"Oh, I have it!" said Adair. "Miss Wilmot is the very person! She knows Mr. Brantley was robbed, but does not know by *whom;* yet Brantley is sure to tell her as soon as he returns. She is, too, I am sure, discreet enough; and is, moreover, I suspect, a confidante of Miss Howard's. Besides, as Miss Wilmot selected me to do some rather confidential work for her, I may, with the more propriety ask her to do this for me."

"Yes; that will do exactly," replied Duncan.

"I will ride out to-morrow and see her," resumed Adair, "for the sooner it is done the better. And," he continued after a short pause, "I am just reminded that I have some official business down about Hurricane which I should attend to, and Mr. Wilmot's house is on my way. I will, too, on my trip, be within a few

miles of Wilson's house, and could easily ride over there. Besides, I wish to see him, as you know, in regard to the sale of Mingo. And, if you wish to send any message to Miss Wilson, could I not be the bearer of it?"

"The very thing!" exclaimed Duncan. "That is, if you don't mind venturing into the lion's den."

"No danger—none whatever," replied Adair.

"All right, then!" said Duncan. "I will be greatly obliged if you will call and see Miss Wilson. I will give you a few lines of introduction to her, and will tell her that she may speak freely to you. You can explain to her what I have said to you about my desire to visit my brother; of my wish to get married as soon after my return as possible; and also of my desire to see her before I leave. You will further request her to name the earliest convenient moment when I can see her, and at what place. Should she be so circumstanced that she cannot see me in a week, or fortnight at the outside, I had better not wait, and will leave on my proposed trip as soon as I can make my arrangements. And, Adair, I want you to see Miss Wilson and know her, and I want her to know you. When you know her, I am sure you will approve of the choice I have made for a wife. I should further say, if Miss Wilson is away from home, or anything should occur so that you cannot see her, you can say to Mrs. Lovell all that I have said to you, and request her to see Miss Wilson and send word to me direct or to her sister, Miss Laura."

"All right!" said Adair. "Not a word of your message will be forgotten, and if 'your Kitty' is half as much inclined to talk with me as I am to see and

talk with her, I hope to bring you back a big bundle of good news. I am sure I will be greatly pleased with her, for not only has she received such an unqualified endorsement from you, but I could not fail to respect a young lady so much esteemed by Colonel Lovell and his wife and—Miss—Laura—Howard."

There had been something like enforced merriment in Adair's tones as he spoke until he uttered the name of Miss Laura Howard, when an expression like that produced by an acute pain flashed across his face, observing which, Duncan made no reply, but arose and going to Adair's desk wrote a few lines as follows :

" This will be handed you by my friend and partner in business, Mr. Joseph Adair. He will tell you of some plans and hopes of mine. I have spoken unreservedly to him, and you may trust him as you would your

" G. D."

Handing the note to Adair, Duncan said : " You will see there is no address. None is required ; she knows my handwriting."

Adair folded the note and placed it in his pocket-book ; and, after a short pause, resumed the conversation by referring to Benton, and said : " As you are aware of Benton's relations to Miss Ritchie, I may show you this note " (handing him the one signed " H. G."), " and, when you have read it, I will tell you of how it came into my possession."

Duncan took the note ; and, after reading it carefully, looked up with a bewildered expression and exclaimed : " Mercy on us ! What does this mean ? "

Whereupon Adair related the circumstances attend-

ing the finding of the note, and referred to the impressions it had made on his own mind as well as on Holman's. In conclusion he said: "Holman and I concluded it would be better not to disturb Benton by showing him the note while he was on the farm, or even to-night, but I will hand it to him in the morning."

The more Duncan heard, and the more he thought of the note, the more, apparently, he was puzzled. Finally he said: "Adair, did you ever see Miss Ritchie?"

"I have seen her twice," Adair answered, "but was never introduced to her, nor did I ever exchange a word with her."

"Well," said Duncan, "I have been introduced to her, and on one occasion, at the Siloam Meeting-house, conversed with her for an hour or more. It then struck me that, while attractive rather than beautiful, and a brilliant talker, she was vain and insincere; hence, I fear, our friend may yet be deceived by her; and, if so, it will go hard with him, for he is very confident, and is deeply in love. This warning may therefore be a timely one."

"I should be very—very sorry," said Adair, "to see Benton have any trouble of this sort; for he, of all the young men I know, has seemed to me most to require a good wife to stimulate him in his work."

"Just so—just so!" said Duncan, rising to go, for the hour was growing late.

"One minute before you go," said Adair. "I must explain the visit I received an hour ago from Rudolph. He came to inform me that Blythe & Johnson are hard up for money—of which I was aware,—and that,

as they are both disposed to give up their business, he, Rudolph, thinks that their stock of dry-goods, groceries, etc., can be bought at a great bargain; and he suggested that he and I should buy them out —I to take the active management of the business, etc. That he should have made such a proposition to me !—should have selected *me* as a suitable partner in such a business—about which I know very little—has surprised me very much; so much that I am inclined to think he has some secret designs. It was difficult for me to listen to his proposal with patience, but I did so, and, of course, declined his proposition."

The two friends then parted for the night.

CHAPTER XX.

Adair and his Litttle Nieces—Viney's Message to Mingo—Benton, Adair, and the Note—Adair and Miss Wilmot—Osculatory Conductors—About Warning a Friend—An Unexpected Meeting.

THE next morning, at breakfast, Adair informed his sister that, as he had a long ride to take, he would not return until the following evening.

"Oh, Uncle Jo!" exclaimed the slim and pale Sada, the eldest of his nieces, "do come home and stay with us after supper, and tell us a tale. You have n't told us a tale for a whole week."

"Ah, Sada," replied the uncle, "you forget! for it was only three nights ago that I told you all the story of the 'blind beggar and his dog.' But I 'll try and think up a nice tale to tell you by the time I come back."

"Come, Sada," said the mother, "don't bother your Uncle Joseph."

"'T aint no bother, is it, Uncle Jo?" interposed the impulsive, keen-eyed Jenny, who was number two on the list.

"No, darling," was the pleasant answer, "I love to hear all your little tongues go wiggle-waggle. And now, all of you give me a kiss before I go; and take

good care of your mama ; and don't nurse Pussey, the little cat, too much."

"Oh, Untle Do, 'ont ous take mees wif 'ou ?" asked the chubby, rosy-cheeked little Anna, the youngest of the three nieces.

"Come, Anna," interposed her mother, "don't bother your 'Untle Do.' He 's got to go too far to take you with him this time."

"Yes, pet," said the uncle, taking her up in his lap, "when I come back, we 'll get a big pillow, and I 'll put it before me, and you can sit on it, and you may hold the bridle, and make Ben Simon go where you want to."

And so matters were amicably settled, and the heavy-hearted man walked away—to the kitchen, for he must speak a few words to Viney, the cook, before leaving.

"Well, Viney," he said, when he stood before her, "I have a long ride to take and will not be back until to-morrow. I may, while away, be at Mr. Wilson's house, and, if so, will try and see Mingo. Have you any message to send him ?"

"Oh, Lord, bress yer soul, yes, Mahs Jo !" exclaimed Viney in a tremor of excitement at this sudden and unexpected announcement of an opportunity to send a message to her husband, whom she had not seen for many months. "Oh, yes, Mahs Jo, tell Mingo, fur me, that I 'm well, and that I likes my home here mi'tly; an' tell him, Mahs Jo, that I wants ter see him mi'ty bad ; and that I hopes he 's well. An' please, Mahs Jo, ax him ter send me word when he 's goin' ter be sold. An', Mahs Jo, I know when you see Mingo you 'll like him, for he 's a mi'ty handy man—and——"

"All right, Viney," said the master, interrupting her, for he knew what was coming next—a humble petition for him to buy her husband. "I 'll not forget your message, and will bring you back all the news from Mingo that I can. And do you look out well for sister and the children while I 'm away."

"Yes, Mahs Jo, I 'll do that; yous need n't be oneasy 'bout them," replied Viney, as her master walked away.

The next thing, for Adair, was to go to the Brick Hotel, and order Nero, the tall, slim, muttering negro hostler, to bring out his horse; and then on to the Clerk's office, where he was fortunate in finding his friend Benton alone.

"Benton," said Adair, "I have a long ride before me to-day, and I must be off as soon as my horse is brought out; and I 'm glad to find you alone, for I have come to deliver a peculiar and strange message. Night before last, when Holman and I were sitting up with the body of Hinton Gowan, I picked up a book which I found in the room where hung the portrait of a young lady, which you, no doubt, noticed. From that book there fell this note" (producing it), "and Holman, seeing it fall, stepped forward just as I picked it up. It was sealed, but we felt authorized, by the superscription, to open and read it. We were both astonished by its contents; but, after consultation, thought it best not to show it to you until this morning."

Benton saw plainly, from Adair's words and manner, that the message was no trivial matter, and, on receiving the note, looked thoughtfully for some moments at the singular superscription before he ventured to open

and read it. When he had done so, he turned, for a moment, quite pale, and seemed to be dumfounded, but at last he said :

"In the name of Heaven, what does this mean?" Then pausing for a few moments he went on : "If 'H. G.' stands for Hinton Gowan—and it no doubt does,—and *he* were *living* and ventured to warn me, or tried to make me distrust a lady I love—for that Miss Ritchie is referred to I cannot doubt,—I would treat his words with contempt. But this note was penned by a man who was preparing to take his own life, and *did* take it. I cannot, therefore, help feeling that it comes somewhat as a voice from the grave. And yet—and yet," he continued, after a short pause, "Malice, and not mercy, may have dictated these lines."

"That the note was written by Hinton Gowan," replied Adair, "and that it refers to Miss Ritchie, I have no doubt. What importance, if any, should be attached to it, no one can tell. It may have been dictated by malice, or it may have been pity for the man who, he supposed, would be deceived and made to suffer as his brother had suffered ; or it may be only evidence of such a deranged mind as we would expect to find in a man who was upon the point of committing suicide. But, be this as it may, it would be unjust to Miss Ritchie to permit this note to lessen your confidence in her without further proof. On the other hand, it may be that your love for her has heretofore blinded you somewhat as to her true character ; and, if so, the caution contained in that note may not prove amiss. Then, too, the importance of the subject itself —a true understanding of the mind and heart of the woman you seek for a wife—should, even in the ab-

sence of any such warning, put you on your guard. But, here comes Nero with my horse, and I must soon be off. And, Benton, before I go, I must tell you I have thought much about that note—I have even pondered over what I should say to you, and I have now spoken frankly ; but, if I have said a word that sounds harshly, remember it was kindly meant. And one word more ! Holman has seen that note ; and, even before then, knew somewhat of your relations to Miss Ritchie, and I would suggest that you see and talk with him on the subject."

Benton, as he extended his hand and grasped that of Adair, said : " My friend ! you have spoken just like yourself ; and I will, as you suggest, see and talk with Holman, and with you again on your return to town."

Adair then mounted his horse, rode to the post-office, and was pleased to receive three letters, which he opened and read as he rode along the dusty road in the direction of Mr. Wilmot's. The first letter was from Brantley, written from Frankfort, Kentucky, saying that, since he left Salem, he had done very well ; that he hoped to be back in Salem in a week or two after his letter came to hand, of which he wished Miss W—— to be informed ; that he hoped the rare coins had been traced ; and that on his return he would pay off his note. The second letter was from Brantley's uncle. It was a well written letter, breathing a kindly spirit for his " wandering nephew," from whom he had not heard for several years.. All the information given was confirmatory of what Brantley had told of himself ; but the uncle added the important declaration that while his nephew had, when a boy, been wild and rest-

less he had ever "found him truthful, and never vicious." The third letter was from a gentleman who had, he said, known Brantley "for the past six years," and had been "intimate" with him; that he, Brantley, had never been married, nor had the writer ever heard of his having deceived any lady, etc.

These letters—so thought Adair—had come in the very "nick of time." The information they contained would be gratifying to Miss Wilmot. Then, too, there was now no doubt about Brantley's early return; and Miss Wilmot would not only be a safe custodian of the secret of Rudolph's theft, but she would, without doubt, willingly, yea, even gladly put Miss Howard on her guard against the man who had robbed her lover. Then came those ever-recurring thoughts of Miss Howard! Could it be true that he, Adair, had misinterpreted Davidson's remarks to him? Or that Davidson's purpose was to deceive him? And that, in reality, Davidson had been, as reported, unsuccessful in his suit? But, if she did not love Davidson, could it be possible that Rudolph had long been the favored man? And might it not be that her confidence in and love for Rudolph were so great that she would reject anything short of positive proof of his guilt? If so, the blow that was about to fall upon her would be a severe one; nevertheless, it must be given—given in mercy. And then those words spoken by Duncan recurred to his mind: that no such a sacrifice as he, Adair, was making was demanded by any law "human or divine"; and that Miss Howard's reserve when with him was capable of a very different and more favorable interpretation than that he had placed upon it. But he should not—must not, give heed to such views, else his incli-

nations would soon overpower his own more sober convictions ; and to think of the matter was only adding fuel to the flames—prolonging the battle he had been fighting. Besides, he now had a home ; his sister was a very good-meaning woman, but too sad and nervous to be much of a companion for any one ; but then the children were growing very fond of him, and were already a real comfort ; there was no chance for him to have the blues when they were around, climbing upon his knees, and begging him to tell them tales ; but, how he wished one of them was a boy—but no ! there was the black-haired, black-eyed, handsome boy, Dan ! And he, Dan, and his aged father would probably soon be with him, and then he, Adair, would have—well, it would be more like a home than any he had ever had since the good old Quaker brothers died. And Duncan ! how strange had been his wanderings, and how passing strange that he should have met as he did the daughter of the notorious Jim Wilson, and should have fallen in love with her ; and yet their union would doubtless be a happy one—certainly a promising one for her, for Duncan would be a good husband. And Miss Wilson ! he was rather curious to see and know her, and learn from her own lips what she thought of Miss Laura ; but here he was again getting back into the same track ! And there was Benton, poor fellow ! doubtless now bothering his brain over that strange note. And could it possibly be that Miss Ritchie was a heartless coquette, and would cause Benton many a day of heartache ? And that strange man, Holman ! Why was it he seemed to think that Walter Gowan was not so much to blame as most people thought him ? Could it be that Holman knew more about Miss

Ritchie, and more about all these sad matters than he had chosen to tell any one? "Well—well!" he said to himself, "this world is full of mysteries, and things 'are not always what they seem.' But will the time ever come when all mysteries will be revealed? when we can walk in the light instead of the twilight or darkness that now surrounds us? when our imperfect and unfinished life-work can be rounded up and completed? But here I am at Mr. Wilmot's."

Miss Wilmot was at home and welcomed Mr. Adair with more than usual cordiality, but with something of excitement in her manner, for she surmised that he was the bearer of tidings for her from or about Mr. Brantley. And, impetuous as she generally was, when her feelings were enlisted, no sooner was Mr. Adair seated than she said: "I am sure you have some news for me; and, from your smiling as you do, that it is good news; so tell me quickly! You don't know how impatient I can sometimes be."

"I am learning," Adair smilingly replied, "and I suppose should I keep silent for a few minutes and watch you attentively—which I am half inclined to do—that I would know all about it. But I relent. I never could resist such a pleading look as yours; so here are three letters which you can read, and they will tell you what, I am sure, you most want to know. And, while you are reading the letters, I will step out into the porch and get me a dipper of water. You keep your seat," he added, seeing she was about to rise and wait upon him, "for I know where the water pail is, and will help myself."

Adair was absent from the room until she had finished reading the letters. It was very thoughtful of

him—so she thought,—for it enabled her to read more attentively, and with less embarrassment than she could have done had he been present. Besides, it gave her a chance to press, unobserved, one of the letters to her lips. But why she should have done so, what comfort, consolation, or pleasure she could have derived from such osculation we may not be able to explain. It 's one of those mysteries which, if we but keep our eyes open, we may see every day. In this case may there not have been a mysterious spiritual current of—well, call it love, and may not this current have been completed as currents of electricity are completed by one wire touching another, or by two persons joining hands? If so, Miss Wilmot's osculation may not have been so unmeaning as some arctic mortals may suppose. Furthermore, if it afforded her any pleasure or satisfaction to experiment in that way—and we suppose it did, for she did it not only of her own free will and accord, but she did it several times,—it is not for us to complain, but rather to wish that she had had a better conductor than that sheet of paper. And yet, now that we come to think about it, a pair of perfect conductors might have caused too severe a shock for even her not over-nervous system. We believe, however, it is a well ascertained fact that ladies, even young and delicate ones, can stand such shocks much better than men, particularly the young and vigorous, upon whose nerves, in certain circumstances, it is said to be very trying.

When Adair returned to the room, he found Miss Wilmot in an eminently good humor. "Did n't I tell you so?" she exclaimed rather than asked.

"If you did, I have, I am sorry to say, forgotten all

about it, and must ask you to tell me again," replied Mr. Adair, with a mischievous twinkle in his black eyes.

"Oh, ho!" she exclaimed, "and so you, too, can be a tease. But I forgive you this time. Come, sit down and tell me that you regard these letters as very satisfactory. Don't you see his uncle says he was always truthful, and the other letter says he was never known to deceive a lady."

"Well, seriously, the letters are certainly satisfactory," answered Adair. "But," he went on, "I have a long ride before me and have but little time to spare; yet, before I go, I must remind you that once on a time you made me promise that I would assist you, if I could, in paying a debt which you insisted that you owed me."

"Yes, I remember all about it," she replied, "and as my debt is larger now than then, it is quite time I was paying a portion of it. Do let me know how I can do so."

"Well," replied Adair, "you can pay the entire debt, and leave me your debtor, by doing a friend of yours and mine what, I suppose, will be a service. I will explain. You know that Mr. Brantley was robbed just before he left Salem. He told me that he was almost certain that he knew who robbed him. When he told me the name I was astonished, for it was that of a young man who stands high in this community. There were, in the money stolen, three rare gold coins, and Mr. Brantley requested me to keep a lookout for those coins, and find out whose hands they had passed through, hoping thus to determine positively who was the thief. Two of those three coins I now have in my

possession. And, what is seemingly conclusive, I have traced those two coins to the possession of *the man* Mr. Brantley thought had robbed him. Now I have heard that *that* man has lately repeatedly visited a young lady friend of yours and mine ; and, by some, it is thought that he has, or intends addressing her. And, as she is ignorant of his true character, and as he is young, handsome, and rich, it is not improbable he may win her heart and hand."

"In the name of mercy !" exclaimed Miss Wilmot, who had been listening almost breathlessly, "you do not mean Warren Davidson, do you ?"

"No," answered Adair, promptly. "I do not."

"Oh, Mr. Adair," Miss Wilmot quickly resumed, "then excuse me, for I thought Laura Howard was the young lady you referred to as your friend and mine ; and I could only think of Warren Davidson as one who had, or was likely to address her, else I never would have suspected one whom I have known so long and intimately : and I always liked Warren."

"Miss Wilmot," said Adair, speaking very gravely, "I should have told you at once that Miss Howard is the young lady to whom I referred. And now, I would like to know if, in the circumstances, you think she should be merely warned to beware of the young man, or furnished with some proof of his criminality ?"

"She should, I think, at once be told the truth ; that, if deceived, she should be undeceived. But," she added, "I could perhaps judge better if I——"

"If you knew who the young man was," said Adair, interrupting her. "Henry Rudolph is the man."

Miss Wilmot fairly sprang from her chair. She

looked for a moment straight into Mr. Adair's eyes, but one glance was enough to show her that he was not jesting—that he was deeply in earnest. Then inhaling a long breath, she exclaimed: "Mercy on us!"

"I see you are much surprised," said Adair, calmly.

"Surprised? Greatly surprised!" she exclaimed. "And just to think of it! He has lately paid me several visits—was here yesterday, was unusually affable and friendly, and even undertook to tease me about Mr. Brantley! Said he hoped he would soon be back here—that he was sure I hoped so too; asked me plainly if I thought he would come back; said Salem was very dull without him, and ever so much more. But I can see through it all now! He 's uneasy and does n't want to see Mr. Brantley back here. Oh, the hypocritical villain! Don't be shocked, Mr. Adair. It 's only calling things by their right names. And," she continued, her eyes fairly flashing, "I should n't be surprised if he was over at Squire Howard's this very day. He said yesterday he might call and see Miss Laura to-day. Oh, she must know—must know about him!"

"But, Miss Wilmot," replied Adair, "I must here give you a double warning, and then trust to your intelligence and womanly tact to do what you think best. In the first place, Mr. Rudolph should not have reason to suspect that his crime has been discovered; the time for that will be after Mr. Brantley's return, which I am glad to know will be so soon. Publicity now might defeat Mr. Brantley's plans. In the second place, I would prefer that Miss Howard should not know of my having warned her against Mr. Rudolph

through you or any one else. You know my intimacy with Squire Howard, and, I may add, that for him and for every member of his family I have the very warmest regard, and it would pain me much to have them possibly misconstrue my motives, or think me officious or meddlesome in this or in any other matter. Now, you can clearly see that, if you or Miss Howard should suddenly change your demeanor towards Mr. Rudolph, in a very perceptible manner, it would, doubtless, excite his suspicions and perhaps alarm him. If you do not know, you can perhaps learn whether there is any foundation for the report that Mr. Rudolph has, or is likely to address Miss Howard, and how she is likely to receive his advances. If it is certain she has or would decline them, then there can be no necessity for giving her any warning, for she will, in due time, learn the man's character."

"I had not thought," replied Miss Wilmot, gravely, "of all these matters; but, now that I see clearly, you may be assured I will do nothing to awaken Mr. Rudolph's suspicion before Mr. Brantley's return. Nor will I let Laura know from whom I have received my information. I, however, still adhere to my first impression, that she should know the facts and be put upon her guard at once. I know that Mr. Rudolph has been an occasional visitor at Squire Howard's for several years, and has always been on very friendly terms with Laura; and, as he has recently visited her quite often, it is not improbable he may be in love with her; in fact, it would be almost a wonder if he were not, provided he had any reason to think his suit would be successful. But that she loves *him* I don't believe, for—well for the best of reasons—I——"

"Excuse me!" interposed Adair. "You perhaps mean that you know Miss Howard to be engaged, or to have given her heart to another. If so, I again submit whether there is any necessity for giving her any warning. My only desire is to serve a young lady, whom I greatly esteem, from being deceived; for it would be a terrible calamity for any worthy young lady to become the wife of such a man as Rudolph; for, when she found out his true character, she would certainly be miserable."

"Mr. Adair," replied Miss Wilmot, speaking with much earnestness, "I am almost sure that Laura is *not* engaged to *another*. That her heart may have been given to another I think probable. But," she added with peculiar emphasis, "few young women can deliberately make up their mind to pass through life alone, —never to get married; and, if one is so unfortunate as to have centred her affections upon one who makes no return, it may cost her a terrible struggle to abandon all hope, give up the loved one as lost, and accept another; but it is often—too often done. It may, for aught I know, be thus with Laura Howard; and in this lies her danger and Henry Rudolph's opportunity; and, for this reason, I think the sooner she knows his true character the better, and I will ride over this evening and see her."

It will be understood that Miss Wilmot *knew* that Miss Howard was not engaged to Warren Davidson, and, further, that she loved Mr. Adair. She, too, was convinced that should Mr. Rudolph address her friend his suit would be kindly but firmly refused: consequently there was, she thought, no real necessity for putting Miss Howard on her guard. But the more she

thought over the whole matter, the more she felt incensed against Mr. Rudolph, and the more inclined "to put a spider in his dumpling," and thus make "assurance doubly sure." In speaking as she did to Mr. Adair, she had aimed to say no more than she was warranted in saying—than, in fact, she felt it her duty, in the circumstances, to say. To have spoken more plainly and positively would, she felt, have been a violation of the confidence reposed in her, and of the positive promise Miss Howard had exacted from her. She earnestly desired to open Mr. Adair's eyes to the true state of her friend's heart, not only for her sake but for his also, for she was thoroughly persuaded that some impediment, that could and should be removed, was keeping apart this man and woman who were so well suited to each other, and in whom she felt such a kindly interest. Hence it was she spoke of the possibility of Miss Howard giving her hand to another than the original possessor of her heart, hoping that Mr. Adair would see the danger he ran, if he loved her, of losing his prize.

Adair, on his part, had noted every word Miss Wilmot spoke. He was momentarily almost convinced that what he hoped for was true,—that Miss Howard was not engaged to Warren Davidson, and that she had never loved Rudolph. Yet this clear-headed man, like many another such, always seemed to get mentally muddled when he came to think about matters in which his own heart was deeply concerned—raising doubts and difficulties where none really existed. Thus, in this case, he reflected that Miss Wilmot had not spoken positively; that she had only expressed opinions which might or might not be correct; and

that, if he caught hold of such straws for comfort, it would only defeat his object—to serve Miss Howard and not himself, for had he not made up his mind that, circumstanced as he was, it would be wrong for him to get married. It was therefore some moments before he replied to Miss Wilmot and said :

" I leave the matter entirely to your discretion ; and must now take my leave of you, for, as I have said, I have a long ride before me to-day."

Adair then mounted his horse and rode off, leaving Miss Wilmot somewhat vexed with herself for having spoken so freely about Miss Howard, for she was now almost persuaded that Mr. Adair did not, as she had hoped, love her friend.

Adair was a cool, sensible man, so every one thought, and yet no sooner had he taken leave of Miss Wilmot—no sooner had he performed an unpleasant duty, than it came into his mind to expose himself to another ordeal, which might be considered as evidence of downright perverseness on his part. As it was but a little out of his way, he thought he should ride by Squire Howard's, and see if the family did not wish to send some message or parcel to Mrs. Lovell. True, he expected he would see Miss Laura, and knew that the sight of her would cost him some extra pangs, but he must not—so he reasoned—avoid her on that account, for it would endanger his friendly relations with the family, and he certainly would not have that to happen if it could be avoided. And thus he actually persuaded himself that it was something more than an act of politeness — was, in fact, his duty — to stop at the Squire's for a few moments ; and if it added fuel to the fire that was burning in his heart, he must neverthe-

less discharge this duty. On approaching the house he observed, hitched at the front gate, a riding horse which he knew to be that of Henry Rudolph. Miss Wilmot had told him that Rudolph had spoken of visiting Miss Laura that day, but he had not expected to find him there, and the fact that he was there again aroused his apprehensions that Miss Laura was favoring his suit.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you," said Ada, who observed Mr. Adair dismounting and ran out to meet him as he approached the house. "It 's been so long since you have been out to see us."

"I have been very—very busy, Ada, and I have now only a moment to stop. I will be at Colonel Lovell's this evening or to-morrow, and thought some of you might wish to send your sister some message or parcel, and, if so, I could take it." Adair spoke in an abstracted manner which did not escape the notice of the observant girl. Then, with some abruptness in his tones, he added: "But you have a gentleman visitor in the house, have you not?"

"Yes," answered the mischievous Ada, "but you need n't be afraid—he won't hurt you—it 's only your particular friend, Mr. Rudolph."

"My friend? humph!" Adair spoke hastily—contemptuously. The quick-witted girl glanced at him; and with her hands slightly elevated, her lips apart, and her blue eyes wider open than usual, said by looks and manner as plainly as she could have done by words —"Oh—ho! and so he 's no friend of yours." Then fearing she had been rude, she quickly added in a demure tone, "Well, he 's no great favorite of mine, I can tell you."

"What a wonderfully wise little head that is on your shoulders," responded Adair, with an effort at gaiety.

"Yes; and I 'm astonished that you have n't found that out before," was her good-natured reply.

As they entered the room where Mr. Rudolph and Miss Laura were seated, the latter arose, and, coming forward, greeted Mr. Adair most cordially, but with some apparent embarrassment in her manner. Mr. Rudolph, usually so cool and self-possessed, was evidently somewhat flustered, but, aiming to hide this, he exclaimed, "Ah—ha! my friend, you here?" and advanced with his hand slightly extended; but Mr. Adair, appearing not to observe his amiable movement, merely bowed, and, addressing the two, said, "Excuse me for interrupting you. And, Miss Ada," he said, turning to her, "will you please deliver my message to your mother, and say to her that I have but a few moments to spare." Then replying to Miss Laura, who handed him a chair and urged him to be seated, he said: "No, thank you. I am on my way to Hurricane, and will probably stop to-night with Colonel Lovell, and I have only called thinking some of you might have something—message or parcel—to send the family, and to offer my services."

"Oh, I have a letter to send; it is already written, and I will be so much obliged if you will take it. Please excuse me, Mr. Rudolph, and I will run and get it." And so saying, Miss Laura left the room.

At the same moment Mrs. Howard entered the room, and, with her warm heart shining through her eyes, she shook hands with Adair and said: "Ah, Joseph, I 'm so glad to see you. You have been quite a

stranger of late. But I 'm so much obliged to you for calling ; for we have a small bundle of socks which we have knit for Harriet's children, and which, if it won't trouble you too much, I would like for you to take to her."

"It will be no trouble. I can tie it behind my saddle," replied Adair.

"Then come with me," said Mrs. Howard, "and I will have the bundle ready for you in a moment." And she led the way into her own room. The parcel was soon fixed up, and, handing it to Adair, she said : "Joseph, you must tell Harriet to come and see us as soon as she can, and to bring all her children with her, so that she won't be in such a hurry to get back home. And you must come and see us oftener, and bring your sister and her children with you. I and the two girls have called to see her, and she now owes us a visit."

"Thank you, Mrs. Howard," responded Adair, "I am kept very busy, but will find time to bring sister out to see you."

Here Miss Laura entered, and Mrs. Howard withdrew to attend to some household duties. The letter which Miss Laura handed to Mr. Adair was addressed to Mrs. Andrew Lovell, but in the lower left-hand corner was written : "For C. W." ; observing which, he said : "If this is for Miss Catherine Wilson, I expect to see her before I do your sister, and could hand it to her in person if you so wish."

"It is for her, and I will thank you to deliver it to her in person," she replied. "But how came you to——"

Observing her pause, he said : "You were going to ask me how I came to guess the letter was for Miss

Wilson. I know, through Mr. Duncan, of your friendship for her; and I am now the bearer of a message from him to her: you can guess the balance."

"But, Mr. Adair," she replied, with an expression of anxiety in her tones, "you do not intend going to Mr. Wilson's house, do you? Will you not be running a great risk?"

"What!" Adair hurriedly answered. "Would *you* have *me* avoid a risk? If so, the sooner I *leave you* the better—so your friend in the next room would doubtless say." And without awaiting her reply, he said "Good-by," and was off.

As he passed to the gate he met Ada, who said to him: "My wise little head says for you to come and see us as soon as you can—remember it."

A moment later Adair was riding rapidly down the road.

CHAPTER XXI.

Henry Rudolph Visits Laura Howard—Ada Enters—Rudolph Nonplussed—He Becomes Uneasy, and Determines to "Arrange Matters"—Adair's Unexpected Arrival, Strange Speech, and Hurried Departure—Rudolph's Appeal.

THE day following Mr. Henry Rudolph's interview with Warren Davidson, the former arrayed himself in his finest suit; and, standing before the mirror in his room, and carefully adjusting the bosom ruffles of his shirt, he was firmly persuaded that he was indeed a man of "resources"—that being his favorite mental metaphor for indicating his physical, mental, and financial attractions. When he mounted his fine horse and rode forth to conquer the heart of Miss Laura Howard, he had no misgivings as to his success. As he rode along, he did what many a young gentleman does in like circumstances—that is, framed nice and gallant speeches to be made to the young lady, imagined her replies, and then framed his telling rejoinders; oblivious of the fact that it would be impossible to carry out such a programme so as to produce more than a skeleton of what was intended for a thing of beauty.

Miss Howard received Mr. Rudolph very affably, as was her wont with all—old and young, rich and poor. But without dreaming of it—in fact supposing the very

reverse would be the result—Mr. Rudolph made a mistake at the very outset, by dressing in a very "swell" style,—for there were such creatures as swells then as now. This was at once observed by Miss Howard, and, woman-like, she jumped to the conclusion that her visitor was very vain. Now vanity may, at least to a moderate extent, be excusable in a lady, particularly if she is young and pretty, but the almost universal decision of the female sex is against the vain man. And that observant and frolicsome younger sister, Miss Ada, sought the first opportunity she could find to whisper, "Oh, sister Laura, is n't he distressingly fixed up? his bosom ruffles! watch them wave! He expects to make a sensation to-day."

After the usual greetings, inquiries as to the health of the family, and some remarks concerning the weather, Mr. Rudolph felt that the Court was now open and ready for the transaction of business. It should be understood that he had *read* some law books; not with a view of practising at the bar, for there was no necessity for a gentleman in his position to undergo the drudgery of such a profession; but he wished it understood that he had acquired a fair knowledge of the law, not merely as an accomplishment, but as being essential to one whose business transactions were of such importance as to call for an intimate acquaintance with the forms, etc., of legal documents. He was likewise a very general attendant at the sessions of the Circuit and County Courts, and took quite a lively interest in every case involving matters of a personal nature, particularly such as exposed the stupidity, weakness, or vice of litigants. Hence it was that, on the present occasion, Mr. Rudolph felt some-

what as if the position was similar to a trial before a Court ; and as he was to plead his own case, and was a man of such "resources," he had no fears as to the result of the trial.

"Well, Miss Laura," he began, "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you so often of late as I have wished. You have not, I believe, visited town for some time?"

"Mother, Ada, and I were in a town a few days ago on a visit to Mrs. Adair."

This reply was not the one Mr. Rudolph had imagined. There was to have been some pleasing acknowledgment on Miss Howard's part of his anxiety to see her. Then, the claims of Warren Davidson were to have been the first inquired into. True, Davidson had told him of his having abandoned his suit, but then Davidson might, for aught he knew, have been only trying to hoodwink him—may have had some purpose to serve in deceiving him ; besides, lying was generally considered excusable when young men were questioned about affairs of the heart. But this mention of the name of Mrs. Adair was an unexpected opening, and suggested an investigation into the position of that possible rival, Mr. Joseph Adair.

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Rudolph—for he rarely exclaimed : he was too cool and collected for that. "You called to see Mrs. Adair, did you? And do tell me what kind of a person you found her?"

"A very quiet and pleasant lady ; but, having so recently lost her husband, she is very sad ; and, besides, is in such delicate health that our visit, from no fault of hers, was somewhat depressing."

"Oh, Miss Laura," replied the complimentary Mr.

Rudolph, "you are so very sympathetic that you take, perhaps, an exaggerated view of other people's troubles. Mrs. Adair will doubtless soon be as lively as most young widows."

"We may certainly hope," responded Miss Howard, "that time will assuage her grief, as it does that of others. If it were not so life would be a burden to the bereaved."

Again there had been no response to his complimentary allusion to her sympathetic nature; and his facetious reference to gay widows had brought forth only a platitude on life's sorrows.

"But," he replied, "Mrs. Adair was certainly very fortunate in having a brother-in-law to provide her with such a home, and he will no doubt soon learn how to cheer her."

"Mr. Adair is certainly a generous, thoughtful, and considerate man. He has well performed a brother's part towards Mrs. Adair and her children."

"Oh," said Mr. Rudolph, wincing under the outspoken commendation of his possible rival, "you remind me that Mr. Adair is one of your particular friends."

"Yes; and not of mine only, but of my father and every member of the family," was the frank reply.

"His position in *your* estimation, Miss Laura, is certainly to be envied," ventured Mr. Rudolph.

"'Charity,' we are told, 'envieth not,'" was the prompt reply of Miss Howard, but there was no malice or uncharitableness in her tones.

Mr. Rudolph, however, felt that her response to his pointedly complimentary remark was uncharitable; and came to the conclusion that he had better drop

that branch of the "case," for the present, and take time to give it more thought. Then mentally referring to his original programme, he said: "Ah, Miss Laura, have you seen anything lately of your old friend, Warren Davidson?"

"Yes," she answered, "he was out to see me a few days ago."

"Warren has seemed to me a little troubled of late," Mr. Rudolph ventured to say; and, with rather a knowing look, but in a tone meant to be jocular, he added: "And I should not be surprised if you have had something to do with it."

"Oh, Mr. Rudolph, how can you say so? What makes you think so?" That was the reply, or something equivalent, which was down on his programme; but, instead, Miss Howard spoke slowly and plainly, and there was suppressed fire in her words as she said: "Sir, if Warren Davidson has chosen to make a confidant of you, and has told you of his troubles, I would not have you violate that confidence because of any questions of mine."

"Oh," replied Mr. Rudolph, "you must not think I was blaming you for the trouble Warren has had. That he should have fallen in love with *you* does not surprise *me;* and if you have chosen to decline his proposal, you of course had a perfect right to do so, and he has no right to complain. In fact, I have no doubt that most of his troubles have been brought upon him by his dissipation and extravagance. None of us are so rich but that prudence and circumspection should characterize our conduct."

That speech was a part of Mr. Rudolph's programme. True, it did not exactly fit as a reply to Miss

Laura's reference to the obligations of a confidant, but he did not care to discuss that point—was, in fact, anxious to avoid it. But the speech was an important one, and must be delivered : and that sage remark of his—of course coming from him it could not be a platitude—as to how one's conduct should be regulated, was expected to be very effective. He was not prepared for the answer he received.

" Mr. Rudolph," Miss Laura replied with a coldness and formality very unusual with her, " I thought I expressed the views all gentlemen entertained regarding the sacredness of confidential communications, but it appears I was mistaken. You have spoken as if your information regarding Warren and myself was direct and positive, and hence, I presumed, confidential. On the other hand, if your information is not confidential and correct, you have, apparently, assumed to *know* what you have only thought or *guessed* at. Then again, your gratuitous remarks about Warren sound to me somewhat ungenerous, coming, as they do, from one who has been regarded as his intimate friend. You have said, ' None of us are so rich but that prudence and circumspection should characterize our conduct,' and I would add that it should also characterize ' our conversation.' "

Pointed as the thrust was, it did not wound Mr. Rudolph as it would have wounded a more sensitive man ; but, being jealous of his reputation, he could not rest under such an imputation. It was, therefore, with more than his usual animation that he rejoined :

" Ah, Miss Laura, you do me an injustice, from which, I am sure, your kind heart will recoil when you have heard me. My information I regarded as correct,

but it was not imparted to me in confidence—I gave no promise of secrecy. What I have said of Warren Davidson was dictated by no unworthy motive ; on the contrary, it was—was my warm regard—for yourself—my deep interest in your welfare, that induced me to let you know the weakness—the true character of the man who was—who was a—a frequent visitor of yours. Hence, I cannot think myself amenable to your implied charge of a lack of circumspection in my conversation."

"The exaction of a pledge of secrecy," rejoined Miss Laura, spiritedly, "should not be necessary to make private conversations confidential communications. If, as you say, Warren is extravagant, it doubtless arises from the natural warmth and generosity of his nature, which, by most persons, is regarded as commendable rather than blameworthy. If he is intemperate it is to be deplored, but it is frequently the fault of young, sociable, and wealthy gentlemen ; but, however deplorable, it is yet less so than such faults as have their origin in the heart, and are evidence of a depraved nature."

"Really, Miss Laura," replied Mr. Rudolph, "you are indeed an able advocate, and you surprise and, I may add, charm me by the acuteness of your intellect and the warmth and generosity of your nature, as shown in entertaining such charitable views."

"But, sir, if I am to be commended for entertaining and expressing charitable views, what would you say of one who entertains and expresses opposite views ?"

"But, really, Miss Laura, you must not suppose I have been actuated by any unkind or unworthy motive in anything I have said. Words spoken in a friendly chat, such as ours, should not be regarded as the words

of a written contract. There is a charm in unrestrained conversation that would be destroyed if we had to be more guarded. And I can hardly regret having spoken as I did, since it has been the means of my discovering your admirable traits, to which I have before alluded."

"I can but accept your disclaimer of unkind and unworthy motives. But, sir, I must say that the charm of conversation should depend on the utterance of honest opinions, views, and sentiments; and I should be very sorry to think that you had disguised your own, and had only sought to obtain an expression of mine."

This thrust made Mr. Rudolph feel decidedly uncomfortable, and caused his smooth, sallow face to color a little. He quickly came to the conclusion to change the topic, and was vainly trying to recall the next item on his programme when Miss Laura called to her sister Ada, who chanced to pass the door, and asked her to bring the knitting she, Laura, had left on the table in her mother's room. There was so much of freemasonry between these sisters that Ada suspected at once that Laura's object was to get her into the room and detain her. When Ada entered with the knitting, one glance from her sister was enough to make her take a seat near her sister's side, open the little reticule that hung on her arm, and take out her own knitting. This gave Mr. Rudolph time to collect his thoughts, and remember the next item on his programme, but the presence of Miss Ada made it necessary to introduce another change; and as Miss Laura seemed in no hurry to come to his relief, by introducing some fresh topic, he finally made a start by addressing Miss Ada, and saying, "What an industrious couple you are!"

"I 'm not sure of that," replied Ada. "Sister Laura does n't seem to mind it, but as for me, I abominate knitting; it is such slow work—one stitch at a time. If I were half as rich as you are, I 'm sure I would have somebody do all my knitting for me."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Rudolph, "that 's the way to talk; that reference to my riches is a most timely and happy one." There was then a movement of his lips and cheeks which showed his sound and regular but discolored teeth; it was evidently meant for a very bland smile, but it fell far short of that pleasing expression. He then slowly said: "And so, Miss Ada, you want to be rich, do you? and avoid the drudgery of work, and thus have time for more pleasing and, with some, more profitable employment."

"But, Mr. Rudolph, is not profitable employment work?"

"Oh, of course; but, you understand, that was not exactly the sense in which I meant it."

"Ah, *I* understand," said Miss Laura. "You did not *say* there was a difference, you only meant us to *infer* it."

It was rarely Ada had heard her sister speak in such a sarcastic tone, and this, conjointly with Laura's desire for her to remain in the room, convinced her that Laura had been provoked by something Mr. Rudolph had said; and, knowing her sister's kindliness and good nature, this hint was enough to put the spirited Ada on her mettle.

"Miss Laura," replied Mr. Rudolph, "my phraseology may not have been strictly accurate, but my meaning, I should have thought, would be clear. There is work that may aptly be denominated drudg-

ery, which we all wish to avoid ; and a higher or nobler work which may be denominated employment ; and, since it calls for the exercise of the higher and nobler faculties, may yield both pleasure and profit."

He had spoken as if he thought it necessary to show his courage and power, and crush out the memory of his previous discomfiture, and he imagined this he had done effectually by his lucid explanation clothed in such majestic words.

"What may seem as drudgery to one, may to another seem the most pleasing employment," calmly replied Miss Laura.

"And, Mr. Rudolph," interposed Ada, "suppose what you call *drudgery* paid the largest *profits*, don't you think *you* would prefer it to the 'nobler employment,' which calls for the exercise of the 'higher faculties'?"

Mr. Rudolph was vexed again, but he rallied ; and, replying to Miss Ada, said : "That I am desirous of making *profits* I frankly confess ; but it is that I may secure an honorable independence ; that, when I have been so fortunate as to secure a wife, I may be able to place her above and beyond the necessity of doing any work that she dislikes."

Mr. Rudolph was calm and cool again—was eminently pleased with his reply, for he had fitly introduced the very point to which he desired to call Miss Laura's attention. But he was disappointed that *she* made no reply.

"Oh!" exclaimed the teasing Ada, "then, when you 'secure' a wife, you expect to be 'independent,' and make her an ornament rather than a helpmate? But, I fear, you would not long find either 'pleasure' or 'profit' in such an experiment."

"Oh, you impudent jade!" *thought* Mr. Rudolph, but, of course, he did not say it, for he was a man of "resources," and must show it. Charitably sparing the "jade," he went again through that facial operation intended for a smile, and said: "Ah, Miss Ada, come tell us, if you were rich, what use you would make of your wealth?"

"Oh, vain little mortal that I am, of course I would spend much of it for *fine clothes*," was the prompt answer.

Mr. Rudolph was now warm—very warm, and his bosom ruffles fluttered. And even Miss Laura gave her sister a quick glance, which was understood; but the spirited girl looked, but did not speak out, her words: "Humph! What harm have I done? I only spoke about myself; and, if I have stepped on his toes, it was not my fault, but because his toes were where they should not be."

Mr. Rudolph soon pleaded some pressing business engagement, and took leave of the young ladies, "hoping, however," so he said, "to have the pleasure" of seeing them again very soon, and that "really" his visit had been a "charming one."

When he had ridden away, Ada burst into a hearty laugh, and exclaimed: "Oh, those ruffles! wer' n't they just distressingly captivating. But now, sister, sit right down and tell me all about it."

And Laura did tell her, word for word, as nearly as she could remember, the conversation between Mr. Rudolph and herself, not forgetting to emphasize his numerous complimentary remarks.

The narration ended, Ada looked soberly at her sister and said, "What do you think he came here for?"

"To make us a friendly visit," was the smiling answer.

"Oh, fudge!" exclaimed the merry Ada, in a tone of mock seriousness. "You know better than that! If it had been a mere social visit, he would never have dressed up so, nor would he have been so profuse in his compliments. He never was so before, was he?"

"No; not to me. You can answer for yourself."

"Oh, fudge! No one ever compliments me—except one."

"And who is that one?" But the moment Laura had asked this question, she wished she had not done so, for she suspected Ada referred to Mr. Adair, the mention of whose name she had tried to avoid.

"Oh, you know who it is," Ada answered. "And he does n't compliment me; he only tells me what he thinks—that I 've got a wise little head, etc. But, sister, suppose Mr. Ruffled Bosom keeps on coming here, and asks you to soothe his heart by pressing your warm cheek against his frills; and afterwards urges you to quit your life of 'drudgery' and accept the 'nobler employment' of becoming his laundress, what will you do?"

"Drudge on!" answered Laura, emphatically, "and you know it. Don't you remember what mother once told us of that man? That she had known him from his early boyhood, and that he was deceitful, cunning, and unprincipled. I then thought she was most too hard upon him, but I have since observed him attentively, and the more I see of him the more I am convinced mother was about right in her judgment."

"As she usually is," said Ada, dancing out of the room.

Mr. Rudolph, as he rode home, was depressed, for

the preliminary proceedings in his suit had not been conducted so successfully as he anticipated. But he was a proud man, and was now aroused and determined to succeed. Miss Laura had, he thought, never before looked so beautiful; and then, too, she was more sprightly than he had thought her; just the kind of a young lady it would be a feather in any gentleman's cap to win; and win her he must and would; there were more ways than one to win a woman's heart; and he was the man of "resources"—"Never say die." "*Nil desperandum.*" "*Labor omnia vincit.*" (He knew a little Latin.)

He continued his visits to Miss Howard but, at each succeeding one he was more guardedly received. He was slow to discover that she was holding him at bay, for he suspected it was a "trick of hers" to whet his desires by opposition. First one thing and then another had prevented him from making a positive avowal of his love and an offer of his hand; when he had done so, he was still sure the "case" would be decided in his favor, for the Squire was comparatively poor, while he was rich. But he was growing impatient. That little matter of Brantley's was troubling him! He was almost sorry he had "got even with him" in the way he did. He could not learn whether Brantley intended returning—he feared he would. Adair, too, had of late treated him very coolly; this might be because of his, Rudolph's, attentions to Miss Laura; but Brantley liked Adair, and it was possible he had told Adair of his loss; and then,—d—— it,—within an hour after he, Rudolph, had paid Davidson the money, Davidson was in the Clerk's office paying Adair some taxes; and it had been only since then that Adair had treated him

with so much coolness. He had thought it would be a capital plan, and easy of accomplishment, to win Adair over to his side ; he had made him a flattering proposition to take him in as a partner—to elevate him, in the social scale, from a saddler and Deputy Sheriff to a merchant with a capitalist as copartner, and yet the plan had miscarried—had, in fact, been coolly received, and promptly and positively declined. It was, therefore, doubly important that he should arrange matters with Miss Laura at once, and he resolved that he would dilly-dally no longer.

And it was to "arrange matters" that he was at the house of Squire Howard when Adair called there on his way to Hurricane. Miss Howard was heartily tired of Mr. Rudolph's visits ; was surprised that he had not discovered the fact, and was reluctantly driven to the conclusion that the shortest, if not the only, way to put an end to his visits, was to give her suitor—for such she now knew him to be—an opportunity to settle the matter. So, after consultation with her mother, and an understanding with Ada, she was alone with Mr. Rudolph, and he was slyly approaching the case, when, lo and behold, Mr. Adair was announced ! It did credit to the nerves of the man of "resources" that, in the circumstances, he met Mr. Adair with so slight a show of embarrassment. But when, as he believed, Mr. Adair had declined to take his hand ; when he saw how cordially not only the two daughters but the mother greeted "the saddler," his heart was on fire ; and, if his thoughts had been written out in plain words, there would have been several sentences not only bristling with profanity, but hinting at some direful consequences.

It was some minutes after Mr. Adair had left, before Miss Howard could compose herself sufficiently to re-enter the room where Mr. Rudolph remained seated. The sight of Mr. Adair—his earnest, anxious face, his hurried and strange words and sudden departure, had awakened a host of anxious thoughts and conjectures in her mind. And then, at such a moment, to have to return to that room! Oh—it was too trying!

Mr. Rudolph observed the pale and anxious face of Miss Howard as she entered, and it but increased the fury of the storm that was raging within him. He was now in no humor for honeyed words, but it was "now or never," and he made his declaration. He was in earnest, and as sincere as it was in his nature to be, but he was neither eloquent, persuasive, nor pathetic. It is, however, but fair to say that he was not permitted to *argue* his "case"; for, as soon as he had advanced far enough to state his major premise, he was interrupted by Miss Howard. She spoke calmly but earnestly; said she had feared that the purpose of his visit was to make such a declaration; that she had hoped he would have discovered how entirely useless it was for him to expect a favorable response, and thus have spared her and himself; that she did not and never could favor his suit, and must ask that no more be said upon the subject, now or at any future time.

For a moment Mr. Rudolph appeared dumfounded, then became petulant, and finally angry. He insisted that she should reconsider her decision; that she should think of her position as his wife; and that he was no trifler, but deeply in earnest. But promptly and firmly she met and checked every advance. Finally, as we have said, he lost his temper, and declared that he was

sure some secret, sneaking enemy of his had been slandering him, and that he was sure he knew the man who had done so. Again he was checked, nay, cowed, and this time by blue eyes that flashed with indignation.

"Mr. Rudolph,"—these were the words that accompanied the flashes,—"no man has spoken evil or disrespectfully of you to me. My decision is based on no words spoken of you, but upon the dictates of my own mind and heart; and I must decline to listen to another word from you on this subject."

And so the interview ended. Mr. Rudolph, as he rode back to town, was no longer the cool, collected man of "resources." By turns he was half-crazed by disappointment and anger, and his eyes soon became slightly bloodshot. Then, too, his appehensions and fears were greatly aroused; for having been slighted by "a d—— saddler," and rejected by "a poor farmer's daughter," it was evident that the "model gentleman" and man of "resources" did not occupy the enviable position he had supposed. But, as the venom in him arose, the words that came into his mind were: "Those who oppose me will rue the day."

It was some time after Mr. Rudolph's departure before Miss Howard was sufficiently composed to sit down and think deliberately over all that had occurred. First, the interview with Mr. Rudolph had been an exceedingly unpleasant one, but, being unavoidable, she was glad it was over; and she had no fear that he would ever reopen the subject, as Warren Davidson had so often done. But could it be possible that, notwithstanding her denial, Mr. Rudolph would still think that some male friend of hers had been slandering him to her?

And who was the gentleman he had suspected? It was—so she thought—probably, almost certainly, Mr. Adair! And could it be that the disappointed and enraged man would work some harm or injury to him who was suspected? And how strange that Warren Davidson and Henry Rudolph had both suspected the same gentleman of the same offence—speaking evil of them to her; and this, too, when, as she knew, he was innocent. It could not be that they looked upon such a man as a common slanderer; they must have *thought* that Mr. Adair loved her, and yet there was, alas, no foundation for this in fact. Then that hurried remark of Mr. Adair's: "Would *you* have *me* avoid a risk? If so, then the sooner *I* leave *you* the better; so your friend in the next room would say." What *could* he have meant? Did he think it a risk to be with *her?* But what risk could it be? Certainly not a bodily risk. Could he—could he have meant that he feared losing his *heart*, as "the friend in the next room" had done? But did he know what Mr. Rudolph was there for? what he was going to offer her? And could it be that he, Mr. Adair, believed her to be in love with *that man?* "Oh! will he never—never understand me, nor I him?" such was the suppressed cry of her faithful, loving heart.

But household duties demanded her attention; and, as she went about her work, she turned these questions over and over again in her mind, until the arrival of Miss Wilmot. But we must now return to Mr. Adair.

CHAPTER XXII.

Adair at Wilson's House—His Interview with Miss Catherine—Her Perplexity and Appeal to Adair—His Compliance—Simon Wright, the Great Preacher — Wilson's Return Home—Adair and Wilson.

JOSEPH ADAIR, after his hurried departure from the presence of Miss Howard, rode rapidly away, his mind being in a state of unusual excitement. The presence of that man Rudolph in a room in private conversation with Laura Howard angered him. It was the pure with the impure, the lovely with the detestable, the innocent with the crafty and vicious. He almost felt that he should have thrown aside all restraint, all sentimental considerations, and should then and there have exposed the man. But then came the more sober second thought. Why should he take this matter so to heart? Must this battle in his heart go on, getting fiercer and fiercer, instead of subsiding?

A rapid ride of about two hours brought him to the house of James Wilson; he had never been there, and had never seen the "dreaded man." He dismounted, and, after hitching his horse, was approaching the house when an elderly lady, who had observed him, came forward and met him on the front porch. He knew her to be Mrs. Wilson, from Duncan's description.

After introducing himself as "Mr. Adair, of Salem," he asked if Mr. Wilson was at home, and was told that he was not; that he had gone out after dinner, but would probably be back in a few hours; and was asked if he would not come in, be seated, and await Mr. Wilson's return. On entering, he was introduced by Mrs. Wilson to her daughter, Catherine, who greeted him most cordially.

Supposing that the ladies might know him to be the Deputy Sheriff of the county, and to relieve their minds of any embarrassment occasioned by his visit, Mr. Adair, addressing Mrs. Wilson, said: "I am the Deputy Sheriff, but I have no official business with Mr. Wilson. The object of my visit is to learn about the sale of a negro man named Mingo. I now have hired, as a cook, a negro woman named Viney, whom I expect soon to purchase. From her I learned that Mingo, her husband, is soon to be sold, and she is anxious for me to purchase him, that the two may be together. And if you, madam, can give me the information I desire, it will not be necessary for me to await Mr. Wilson's return."

This explanation seemed to relieve Mrs. Wilson's mind of some anxiety, and she replied: "Oh, as to the sale of Mingo, my daughter here can give you more information than I can; for, since the death of my son, to whom Mingo belonged, he has been in her service or at her command. But, Mr. Adair, you have not been to dinner, have you?"

"No, madam; but I would not give you the trouble to prepare any for me."

"It will be no trouble; and, if you will excuse me, I will have your horse put up and fed, and will soon

have some dinner prepared for you." And, without awaiting any remonstrance, she left the room.

This was Mr. Adair's opportunity; and he quickly took from his pocket the notes handed him by Duncan and Miss Howard; and, presenting them to Miss Wilson, he said, "I was requested to deliver these to you."

Miss Wilson at once recognized the handwriting, and, after hurriedly reading Mr. Duncan's note introducing Mr. Adair, she, in very earnest tones, said: "I am so glad, Mr. Adair, to know you. I have often heard your name mentioned by Mr. Duncan and by my friend, Miss Laura Howard, and I have really desired to see and know you."

"Then the desire has been a mutual one," replied Mr. Adair. "I know fully the story of my friend Duncan's fortunate acquaintance with you, and I have desired much to know the young lady in whom he is so deeply interested. And I should here tell you that I have also a verbal message for you from Mr. Duncan."

"Speak freely, Mr. Adair, now that we are alone."

"Mr. Duncan requested me to say to you that he desired to leave Salem in a week or two to visit his brother; that, before going, he wished to see you; and that if you could arrange to see him he wished to know *when* and *where*."

"I greatly desire to see Mr. Duncan before he leaves," she replied; "but, before I can determine when and where, will you excuse me while I read my letter from Miss Howard?"

On Adair indicating assent, she opened the letter and read, apparently with deep interest, for several

minutes before she slowly refolded the letter, her mind being so abstracted that it was some moments before she spoke.

"Yes, I will see Mr. Duncan," she said, "at noon, on next Wednesday, at the home of Squire Howard; for I must see Laura also." Then, after a thoughtful pause, she added: "But, Mr. Adair, I wish your advice. You are Mr. Duncan's friend; you are Laura's friend; and I am sure you would be my friend."

"I would gladly serve you if I could; only let me know how I can do so," was the prompt response.

"To you, I will speak freely," she said. "But, first, permit me to ask if you know Mr. Henry Rudolph, and if he is your friend?"

"I know him well; but, to be frank, I do not like him."

"I am glad to know that, for I can now speak with the more freedom. But, another question: Do you know of his having recently visited Miss Laura Howard?"

This unexpected question about a matter that was causing him so much uneasiness, rekindled his anxiety, but, repressing it as well as he could, he answered: "He was at the Squire's when I arrived there to-day, in conversation with Miss Laura, and he was there when I left."

"Mr. Adair," said Miss Wilson, with much earnestness, "I have reason to believe Mr. Rudolph to be a—bad man. Once I met Mr. Duncan, by appointment, at Squire Howard's. On my ride there I was attended by Mingo. A mile or two from the Squire's house I met a gentleman whom I thought to be Mr. Rudolph, but I was not certain. After passing, I called to Mingo

and asked him if he knew who the gentleman was. He answered that it was Mr. Rudolph, and that my father knew him very well. I had been at Squire Howard's but a short while, and was in conversation with Mr. Duncan, when, somewhat to my surprise, Mr. Rudolph entered the house. During his short stay he seemed to watch me as closely as he could; and, when talking with Miss Laura, was inquisitive regarding Mr. Duncan and myself. He has since visited my father twice. During his first visit he solicited an introduction to me, which was accorded him by my father. The impressions he made upon me were unfavorable. On the occasion of his second visit, his attentions to me were so very marked as to be displeasing and even offensive. After he had gone, my father good-humoredly asked me what I thought of Mr. Rudolph. I answered by expressing a candid and unfavorable opinion of him—saying, among other things, that he impressed me as a 'mercenary schemer'; whereupon my father laughed quite heartily, and said I was a better judge of men than he supposed, and wound up by saying: 'Kitty, Mr. Rudolph tells me he is very much pleased with you, and has intimated that, if your dower was made large enough, he might consent to become my son-in-law.' My reply was: 'Father, say to Mr. Rudolph, for *me*, that if I were a *slave* he might have money enough to *buy* me, but not enough to induce me to become his wife.'"

As Miss Wilson uttered her closing sentence Mr. Adair could see from her flashing eyes and indignant tones how intensely in earnest she was. Adair, who was ever a good listener, was now deeply interested, and did not interrupt her.

"Mr. Rudolph now knows," she resumed, "that his mercenary scheme, as regards myself, is a failure. But my father now knows of my interview with Mr. Duncan, and I believe Mr. Rudolph gave him the information. My father has asked me about Mr. Duncan—who, and what he is? I told him Mr. Duncan was a friend of Squire Howard's, what his business was, and that he was in partnership with you. He seemed so strangely and strongly prejudiced against Mr. Duncan that I am confident Mr. Rudolph spoke very disparagingly of him; or it may be that my father knows Mr. Duncan to be——"

"George McGregor," interposed Adair, on observing her to hesitate, "who, when searching for his brother, was so generously assisted by you."

"Thank you, Mr. Adair," she said. "I am glad to find you know so well the way in which Mr. Duncan and I became acquainted. But may I ask if Mr. Duncan has spoken freely to you of my father? And do you know what manner of man my father is, by many, reputed to be?"

"Mr. Duncan has given me," answered Adair, "a minute account of his stay in your father's house; and of his conversations with your father, yourself, and Mingo. He, however, never uttered one unkind word to me about your father; but from him, as well as from other sources, I have heard of unfavorable rumors regarding your father."

"I thank you for speaking frankly and yet so kindly," replied Miss Wilson, "for I may now speak with less restraint. Then to resume: my father may know Mr. Duncan to be identical with George McGregor, towards whom he has a strong antipathy, since

he suspects that it was through him—the 'spy,' as he calls him—that suspicion has recently been aroused against him. But if my father does *not* know this, he may and probably will soon find it out through Mr. Rudolph, or some one else. Besides, if there was no danger of his obtaining the information, I could never hope to obtain his consent to my marriage to Mr. Duncan until he had seen and known him, when he would certainly recognize him as George McGregor. The question, then, is, would it not be better that my father should be informed of the facts? And now, Mr. Adair, you can understand why I spoke of my anxiety to see Miss Howard. She knows Mr. Duncan and Mr. McGregor to be identical. Mr. Rudolph, it appears, frequently visits her; he is cunning and unscrupulous, and may profess to know much more about Mr. Duncan than he really does, and thus throw her off her guard, and obtain some information from her. I wished, therefore, not only to guard her on this point, but, further, to let her know the true character of the man she is receiving and treating as a friend, for if she knew him *as I do*, pure as her nature is, I am sure she would no longer permit his visits."

"Is there no danger"—Adair could not resist the inquiry—"that she may have received him in a tenderer capacity than that of a friend?"

"What! as a lover?" she exclaimed. "No, never! never! There is no danger of that! I believe her heart to be unchangeably given to another—and to one who is worthy of her, but who is, apparently, blind to the fact—not aware of the treasure that might be his."

"I must, Miss Wilson, admit that your words relieve

my mind of much anxiety. I know Mr. Rudolph better perhaps than any one else, and know him to be an unprincipled man ; and learning, only a few days ago, of the attention he was showing Miss Howard, and that his purpose was doubtless to woo her, I thought, as you have just expressed it, that she should know the character of the man, and I am assured that, before the sun goes down to-day, she will know enough to put her on her guard."

" I am glad to hear that," responded Miss Wilson. " And, that being the case, there is no necessity for my seeing her ; but I will write her a few lines before you leave, if you will be kind enough to deliver my note to her."

" With pleasure ! " Adair answered. " And now as regards your father : I am clearly of opinion that no good purpose can be served, and much harm might result, from keeping him in ignorance of your relations to Mr. Duncan—*provided* you have made up your mind to become Mr. Duncan's wife, as I hope you have, and as, I know, Mr. Duncan certainly expects. And, right here, let me say that I know George Duncan well ; that your father is wrong in regarding his act as that of a spy ; for, on the contrary, it was that of a brave man and an affectionate brother to enter your father's house as he did ; and not only do I esteem him as an honest, industrious, and intelligent man, but the heart that is in him has drawn me towards him as if he were my brother."

" Oh, a thousand thanks for such words ! " exclaimed Miss Wilson. " And, Mr. Adair, know you this ! My heart, my hand, and, if need were, my life are George Duncan's ; his wishes shall be my wishes.

But, Mr. Adair, it would pain me much to be disobedient to my father's commands, or even his wishes ; for, whilst the world may think or suspect evil of him, I have only known him as a kind, indulgent, and loving father. Hence I am exceedingly anxious to obtain his consent to my union with Mr. Duncan. And, oh, Mr. Adair, I do so wish *you* could speak to him of Mr. Duncan as you have just spoken to me."

"If I thought my words would have any influence with your father, I would gladly speak to him, and serve my friend and yourself the best I could."

"I am sure *your* words would have much weight with him," she replied, with peculiar emphasis, "and I will tell you *why*. Last night there stayed with us a preacher named Simon Wright. He and my father were friends many years ago. Mr. Wright is said to be a great preacher, and he is certainly bold and zealous in the cause of his Master. He did not hesitate to give my father a kindly but pointed lecture, and before retiring for the night asked permission to hold family prayers. Such a thing never happened in my father's house before, but the permission was accorded him ; he prayed, and a more forcible and earnest prayer I never heard. Somewhat to my surprise, I must confess, my father not only treated Mr. Wright kindly but with great consideration. And now I come," she continued, her eyes aglow with pleasurable excitement, "to a singular and pleasing incident relating to *you*, Mr. Adair. In the course of conversation, my mother and myself being present, Mr. Wright asked my father if he knew a Mr. Joseph Adair of Salem, who, he understood, was the Deputy Sheriff of the county. My father laughingly replied that he knew *of* the man, but

was not personally acquainted with him ; adding, that he was happy to say there had been no occasion for visits from that officer. 'That 's right ! I 'm glad to hear it !' said Mr. Wright, and he then continued. 'Some years ago I knew nearly every one in and around Salem, but I suppose this Mr. Adair must be a comparatively new-comer.' 'Yes,' answered my father, 'he came to Salem about a year ago and opened a saddlery shop, and seemed to be prospering ; but, owing to bad health, he gave a journeyman in his employ, named Duncan, an interest in and the management of the business, and he, Adair, is now Deputy Sheriff.' 'Well,' said Mr. Wright, 'he 's a downright good man. And, Mr. Wilson,' he added very emphatically, 'if ever you come across him, you must treat him *well*, and you know how to do that !' 'Why so ?' my father asked. 'A short time ago,' answered Mr. Wright, 'I got a letter from my sister, the widow of Marion Kent, saying that money-loving old Johnson Keep (God help him !), having sued my father for a balance due by him, as security for his dead son-in-law, sent down this Mr. Adair to levy upon the little farm stock my poor old father has left ; but when the officer got there, and saw the age and infirmity of the old man, and that he and my sister were almost entirely dependent upon the labor of her son—a boy some fifteen years old,—he did not make the levy, but paid off the debt himself, upon the boy's promise to return the amount—and, mark this ! as soon as he conveniently could *without detriment* to the *wants* of his *mother and grandfather*. And not only so, but he has since furnished the boy with some farming implements. And now, Mr. Wilson,' added the preacher with much

vehemence, and slapping my father familiarly on the shoulder, 'that is what I call practical Christianity, which, after all, is the kind that best fits us for this life and for the life to come. And there is another, and an immeasurable life! as sure as yonder river rolls on to the mighty ocean.' 'And what,' asked my father, 'was the amount of the debt paid off by Mr. Adair?' 'It was, I believe, only some seventy dollars,' was the reply, 'but that is no small sum for a poor man such as I suppose Mr. Adair to be from what you have told me.' My father then left the room, and in a few minutes returned and handed to Mr. Wright the seventy dollars, telling him to send it to the boy to pay off his debt. But Mr. Wright replied: 'No, Mr. Wilson, this offer does credit to your heart, and I thank you for it; but I want the boy to work and make the money and pay off that debt himself; he will then never forget the lesson, and in God's providence it will make him a better and more useful man.' 'I don't know,' responded my father, 'but that you are about right,' and then added: "It was well done on Adair's part, and I certainly will, if I ever come across him, remember your request.' And just to think," continued Miss Wilson, "that all this was only last evening, and that you, Mr. Adair, are here to-day! Does it not look providential? And can you now be surprised that I should think *your* words would have much weight with my father?"

Adair remained silent and thoughtful for several moments; he was thinking of some anonymous lines he once memorized:

> "A pebble, in the streamlet thrown,
> Hath turn'd the course of many a river;

A dewdrop, on the tiny plant,
Hath warp'd the giant oak forever."

So now, that little and seemingly unimportant transaction of his with the boy, Elijah Kane Kent, had come to the knowledge of James Wilson, and had strangely opened the way for him to approach that dreaded man, speak plainly to him, and possibly accomplish a great good. Then, replying to Miss Wilson, he said, "I see—I see," he spoke abstractedly, but resumed with much decision: "Yes, I will see your father, and will talk with him; but tell me what you wish me to try and do, and I will do my best."

"Instead of my meeting Mr. Duncan at Squire Howard's, I would so like to have him come here."

"But suppose, when I have spoken to your father, he should be so displeased as to forbid your seeing Mr. Duncan again, what then? Would it prevent you from keeping your appointment on Wednesday next?"

Miss Wilson paused for some moments before she replied: "It would not. But in that event it would be better for me to meet Mr. Duncan at Colonel Lovell's than at Squire Howard's. But, Mr. Adair," she resumed after a thoughtful pause, "on reflection, I can see that, in speaking to my father, your task would be a delicate one, and possibly involve you in some trouble. I must ask you to excuse my want of consideration, on the ground of my great anxiety and doubt as to what course I ought to pursue. I therefore release you from your promise."

"Ah, but you forget," he replied, "that I, too, am much concerned in what so deeply concerns my friends.

Delicate as the task looks to be, it may prove less difficult than we suppose. How would this plan do? For me to say to your father that Mr. Duncan knows you, and desires permission to visit you; that before granting such permission, it was but right he should know that Mr. Duncan and Mr. McGregor are one and the same; then truly represent Mr. Duncan's character; and, in conclusion, ask him, before giving me an answer, to see you and learn your wishes in the matter?"

"Then you are really willing to undertake the task?" she asked, her face kindling with anxiety.

"I am," answered Mr. Adair, as if there were no difficult task imposed upon him.

Extending her hand, she said: "You are indeed a true friend. Speak to my father; say what you think best; then, if you can, send him to me. I have only trembled to break the ice—to make any disclosure, but that once done I will have no fears. But," she continued, "your dinner will soon be ready, when I will ask you to excuse me, and I will write a few lines to Miss Laura. I will see you again after your talk with my father, and I will then let you know definitely where and when I will see Mr. Duncan. And as to Mingo," she added, "he will have to be sold soon, but I do not know when—that my father can tell you. I had resolved he should not be taken from the county, or pass into the hands of any one he was disinclined to belong to; and, if necessary, I intended getting my good friend, Colonel Lovell, to buy him for me. But, as you will own his wife, it is far better that you should own him. You must see and talk with him. He is honest, faithful, and remarkably intelligent. I will

regret much to see him go ; but, if I am soon to have another home, I would prefer that Mingo should not remain here."

" If I buy Mingo," replied Mr. Adair, " I must first know that he is satisfied for me to do so. If he afterwards becomes dissatisfied I will agree to let you have him, when you get your new home, at a price not exceeding that paid by me, or I will permit him to find another master. I would like to see and talk with him before leaving; and, besides, I have a message for him from Viney."

" I will arrange that you see him. I will also tell him of your goodness, and of your kind offer to me ; and I am sure he will be delighted to go with you."

Mrs. Wilson here entered, and invited Mr. Adair to dinner in an adjoining room. She was sorry, she said, that she could not give him a better dinner, owing to the hour, etc. The dinner was, however, a really good one, and Mr. Adair told her he would show her that he thought so by doing ample justice to his appetite. Miss Wilson explained to her mother that she wished to write a note to her friend, Miss Laura Howard, in reply to one she had received from her by Mr. Adair, and asked to be excused from attendance at the dinner table. After the daughter had left, Mrs. Wilson chatted quite freely upon general topics, but did not refer, excepting incidentally, to her husband, nor was any reference made to Mr. Duncan. She, however, ventured to express the hope that Mr. Adair would buy Mingo, who was a " good servant," and she would be " glad to know he was with his wife."

The meal over, Adair returned to the room in which he had before been seated, and had not long to wait

before Mr. Wilson entered, and was introduced, by his wife, to Mr. Adair. Mr. Wilson manifested not the slightest surprise at finding the Deputy Sheriff in his house,—for he had doubtless been apprised of his arrival,—and shook hands with him in the most cordial manner.

After a few minutes of general conversation (Mrs. Wilson having left the room), Adair explained to Mr. Wilson the nature of his business in reference to Mingo, and his reasons for wishing to buy him. In reply, Mr. Wilson stated that a Mr. Richard Anderson, a schoolmate and friend of his son Penn, was the executor of the latter's estate; that, by the will, the executor was empowered to sell Mingo at public auction on the first day of January next, unless in the meanwhile he could find a purchaser at the price which he had fixed, which was nine hundred dollars.

"But, Mr. Wilson," said Adair, "do you not think nine hundred dollars a high price for a negro man who is, I am told, about thirty years of age?"

"That is about Mingo's age," Mr. Wilson answered, "and it seems a full price, but he is healthy, strong, and a good worker, and will, no doubt, bring that price. However, as you will own his wife, I would like you to buy him, and I will, myself, see Anderson, and may be able to induce him to take something less."

"But how about the payments?" Adair asked. "Will cash be required, and when? For, before paying the amount, it may be necessary for me to make some arrangement to get the money."

"Oh, I don't think there will be any trouble about that," Mr. Wilson answered. "I can, no doubt,

arrange that for you ; in fact, I have some money to loan ; and, if you require to borrow, I could probably let you have the amount you need."

Adair was somewhat surprised at such an intimation, and his first thoughts were : " What does this mean ? Does he wish to get me in his power ? " But, without betraying his surprise, he promptly replied : " I thank you, Mr. Wilson, for your intimation ; but I hope it will not be necessary for me to become a borrower even if I buy Mingo. I would, however, like to know what rate of interest you would require."

" I have some money out at twelve, ten, and some even as low as eight per cent.," he answered, " and I could perhaps accommodate you at eight."

" Thank you," said Adair. " Eight per cent. is considered a moderate rate ; but, although I have never tried, I think I can borrow as much as I am likely to require at six per cent."

" Well," replied Mr. Wilson, " it is better to earn six per cent. than to let one's money remain idle ; and, if you require to borrow, you might come and see me."

" Thank you," responded Adair, " I will bear it in mind."

Mr. Wilson then asked some questions as to who were likely to become candidates for the " Legislature " (the lower house), the State Senate, and for Congress. Adair answered, so far as he could, and the conversation soon became quite animated, but entirely friendly. Upon some points, both as to men and measures, they were in accord, while on others they materially differed. Wilson, when animated, was a good talker, and a man of even more ability than Adair had

supposed, and he was evidently much interested in the discussion, for such the conversation soon became. Wilson was interested because in Mr. Adair he had found a man who not only frankly but forcibly presented his views—which, to him, was unusual, for most men with whom he came in contact apparently sought to agree rather than argue with him. Besides, Adair possessed such a fund of information, and was so well posted on all political subjects, that Wilson was both interested and instructed.

But Adair, seeing a fitting opportunity, said : " But, Mr. Wilson, pleasant as it is to sit here and talk with you, I must not forget that time flies, and that there is yet a private matter about which I wish to speak with you."

" All right, sir," responded Mr. Wilson good-humoredly, " I am ready to listen."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Adair's Appeal to Wilson for Duncan—The Effect—Hearty Congratulations—Wilson as a Fond Father—Miss Catherine's Notes—Mingo Made Happy—Adair at Col. Lovell's—A Flattering Invitation—Adair at Squire Howard's—His Letter and Message for Miss Laura—Her Surprise and Pleasure.

ADAIR could but feel some misgivings as to the result of the disclosure and application he was about to make to Mr. Wilson; but, having freely agreed to undertake the task, he did not hesitate to speak.

"Mr. Wilson," he said, "my friend and partner in business in Salem, Mr. George Duncan, knows your daughter, and honors and admires her. He wishes permission to visit here as a suitor for her hand. But, before granting him this permission, it is but right that you should know that he was once, for several days, in your house, under the assumed name of George McGregor. If you, sir, do not know the motive for his disguise I can fully explain it; and, I am sure, you will then admit that, so far from acting unworthily, he showed himself to be a brave man and a most devoted brother."

"I have thought of the man as a d—— spy!"

exclaimed Wilson, emphatically, "who went from my house and put in circulation false reports about me; so that my liberty, if not my life, has been placed in jeopardy. But," he added more mildly, "I may not fully understand the case, and will listen to your explanation."

Adair then explained "the case" as frankly and fully as possible, and, in conclusion, said: "And now, sir, I am sure, as I said before, you will agree with me that Mr. Duncan acted like a brave man and a devoted brother. And I would add that, I am sure, if he has, since he left your house, entertained any hostile feelings towards you, he has never, at least to me, given utterance to them. And, sir," he continued with impressive earnestness, "you should remember that, before Mr. Duncan ever entered your house, reports to your prejudice were in circulation. I speak plainly, but it is best I should do so, for I would urge upon you to consider that, if your liberty or your life is endangered, by open or secret foes, there is, in addition to the natural uncertainty of life, the more reason why you—a father, with a young, beautiful, and intelligent daughter—should desire to see her well and happily married to a man in every way worthy of her. But, sir, I would not have you decide this matter without consultation with your daughter; go to her, learn her wishes, her feelings, for it is *her* happiness that may be involved in this matter, and then give me your answer."

Wilson rose from his seat, and paced slowly across the room several times before he turned to Adair and said: "Sir, I find I did not understand the case fully. You, sir, have spoken like a brave man and a true

friend. I honor and thank you for it. If you will excuse me, and keep your seat, I will speak with my wife and daughter, and then give you my answer."

For nearly half an hour Adair sat alone, a prey to contending thoughts and emotions, amid which were those ever recurring thoughts of Laura Howard. And Miss Wilson's positive declaration! "What! love Rudolph! No, never! never! Her heart is, I believe, unchangeably given to another, who is apparently blind to the fact—not aware of the treasure that might be his." Could it be possible that he was that other—that "blind" one? The very thought made him rise and pace the room for several moments; when, hearing footsteps approaching, he resumed his seat; and, a moment later, Mr. Wilson and his wife and daughter entered.

Then and there was a sight worthy of the pencil of an artist, the genius of a poet, or the consideration of a philosopher or moralist. That masterful, self-willed, dreaded, and almost outlawed man now momentarily tamed into a genial gentleman, a considerate husband, and a fond and proud father; the rough, hard outlines of his ordinarily stern and stoical face giving place to smiles and a condescending benevolence. And that prematurely aged, cowed, and timid wife! her very look was the seeming embodiment of a prayer that this happy moment might be the beginning of a secure, peaceful, and contented old age. And that young and beautiful daughter! it was not that a placid smile illumined her expressive face; it was not the glad light that shone in her large hazel eyes; it was more than these—it was the peace of mind, the thankful spirit, and, above all, the all-pervading sense of an

innocent love freed from all shackles, which were apparent in her every tone, and gesture, and look.

Approaching Mr. Adair, and extending her hand, Miss Wilson, in a clear, calm voice, said : " Mr. Adair, my dear father has told me of what you said to him ; and I have told him, and my dear mother, *all!* And they have freely permitted me to come and give you the answer to be conveyed to Mr. Duncan. That answer is, ' To come when he may, and he will meet with such a welcome from us all as he desires.' "

The sedate lines of Adair's face relaxed into a whole-souled, gladsome smile, his black eyes fairly coruscated, and, so carried away was he by his delight, that, after shaking hands with the daughter, the mother, and the father, he gave expression to his feelings by turning to Mrs. Wilson and saying : " Madam, I do, with all my heart, congratulate you all ! I know George Duncan as well as one man can know another, and I have never known a more honorable gentleman, a truer friend, nor a more unselfish man."

" I am sure, Mr. Adair," replied Mrs. Wilson, " we will all have reason to thank you for your visit to-day."

" Yes," said Mr. Wilson, with much animation, a broad smile softening his burly face, —" yes, Mr. Adair, after that speech of yours, this Kitty of mine had but little difficulty in melting the heart of her stern old father ; and so you must, to please her, send that partner of yours to see us. And tell him," he added, with a merry twinkle in his eye, " to be careful and not sprain his ankle on the way."

Mr. Wilson's effort at pleasantry was duly acknowledged by smiles and glances at Miss Kitty, whose face

put on an extra tinge from modest blushes ; nevertheless she passed through the entire ordeal with a composure that showed how deeply and earnestly her feelings had been enlisted in the matters at issue.

After the pleasant conversation had continued for some minutes longer, Mr. Adair remarked that it was time for him to be riding ; whereupon Mr. Wilson said : "But you do not think of returning to Salem to-night ?"

"No, sir," answered Adair ; "I will spend the night with my friend Colonel Lovell."

"But," Miss Wilson asked, "do you know the way ?" And being told that he had never travelled the road, she said : "Then you must have a guide. And, father, do you not think Mingo had best go with Mr. Adair ?"

"Yes," answered her father, "for what was once the road was so blocked up by the great hurricane that you, Mr. Adair, would never find your way through the fallen and tangled timber. Besides, you want to see and talk with Mingo." Then calling to the negro boy, Toby, he told him to tell Mingo to bring out the gentleman's horse, and to be ready to go and show the way to Colonel Lovell's.

"And now, Mr. Adair," said Miss Wilson, "if you will excuse me, I will add a few lines to my letter to Miss Laura Howard."

"By-the-way, Mr. Adair," said Mr. Wilson, in a brusque but kindly manner, "as you are not a married man, there 's the young woman for you—Miss Howard ! She has been mighty kind to Kitty, and I 'm sure she 's a prize worth winning."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilson," replied Adair, with some

embarrassment, "I know Miss Howard well, and I agree with you that she is a prize worth winning."

Miss Wilson heard Mr. Adair's reply, and, leaving the room, was soon in her own apartment adding the postscript to her letter, which ran thus:

"P. S.—All is changed. Mr. Adair has wrought almost a miracle! He has talked with father, and now George is free to come and see me—all difficulties are removed. I have often blessed the day I first knew you; now I bless this day and Mr. Adair's coming. Dear Laura, *he* must be *yours!* I have not time to write more, and will tell Mr. Adair to explain all to you, for I am sure *his* explanation will be more interesting to *you* than mine could possibly be."

Then she wrote another short note. It was addressed to Mr. George Duncan, and was as follows:

"DEAR MR. DUNCAN:

"Your friend has executed his mission with marvellous success; he will tell you all. I have only time to say Come! and come soon! and be welcomed by us all. Ever your

"C. W."

Then there was a third short note which ran thus:

"DEAR MRS. LOVELL:

"Mr. Adair will tell you some good news about me. Father has half promised to go with me to the Big Spring on Sunday next to hear Mr. Wright preach. Could you not induce Mr. Adair to come to the meeting with Laura? It might do so much good, and I want much to see her.

"Ever your grateful

"C. W."

Returning to the room where Mr. Adair was, she found her father had gone out; and the mother, thinking her daughter might have some private messages to send by Mr. Adair, considerately withdrew from the room for a few minutes.

"And now, Mr. Adair," said Miss Wilson, when they were alone, "let me assure you I will never cease to thank you for what you have said and done to-day. To make others happy, I doubt not, affords you some measure of happiness, but, oh! how far it must fall short of that happiness which you have brought to me and will convey to Mr. Duncan, to whom you will please deliver this note, which you may read before delivering. And, as you will see my good friend Mrs. Lovell, you will please hand her this note"—handing it to him—"in which I have told her you would tell her some good news about me. She has indeed been a kind friend to me, thinks highly of Mr. Duncan, and I am sure she will be delighted by what you have to tell her. And here," she added, handing him another note, "is my letter to my dear friend Laura. In the postscript, I have said to her that, thanks to you, all my plans have been changed; that Mr. Duncan can now come to see me; that I have not time to explain, but would ask you to do so. And I wish you to tell her *all;* and, further, that when Mr. Duncan comes to see me, I may return with him as far as her house, and stay with her for a day or two."

Of course Adair promptly, and apparently with perfect willingness, consented to deliver the letters and messages; but really he felt that to deliver the message to Miss Laura would cost him more anxiety and trepidation than his talk to the dreaded Jim Wilson; however, there was no help for it.

But now his horse was ready and Mingo was at the gate ; to which Mr. Wilson and the ladies accompanied him. After shaking hands with Mrs. and Miss Wilson and bidding them good-by, and receiving pressing invitations to come and see them whenever he was in the neighborhood, Adair was about turning away when Miss Wilson, speaking in an undertone, said : " Oh, Mr. Adair, I have spoken to Mingo, and he seems much pleased. And," she added, her face lit up by a radiant smile, " you must be sure and remember—my father's advice, and the *prize*." But, before Mr. Adair could catch her meaning and make reply, she stepped back by her mother's side ; so he only looked and smiled his " I will," for there was no danger of his forgetting ; as for acting upon her advice, that was another matter.

Mr. Wilson, in introducing Mingo to Mr. Adair, merely said : " Mr. Adair is thinking about buying you Mingo, as he will also own your wife."

Mingo's only reply was a forward inclination of the head and a quick " Yas, sir."

Adair was about to take leave of Mr. Wilson with a more kindly feeling for him than he ever supposed he would entertain for one of such bad repute. His feelings were more those of pity than of hatred—detestation of the man's bad qualities, mingled with the conviction that there were redeeming features in his character ; that he was one who might have been great and good, but who, perhaps, in some thoughtless or unguarded moment, had wandered or been enticed from the straight and narrow path into forbidden ways, and had not the moral courage to turn from his depraved and downward course.

" Mr. Wilson," he said, aside, " before leaving, I

wish to say that as you were a stranger to me, and having heard much to your prejudice, I came here with some misgivings as to the reception I would meet with; but you, and your wife and daughter, have treated me so kindly that I can but believe you are a better man than you have credit for."

Wilson, grasping Adair's extended hand, replied: "I like to hear a man talk as you do, for I believe you to be sincere. Now mark what I say!"— and here he held himself proudly erect, and, with a steady look into Adair's eyes, continued—"I never professed to be a saint, nor am I worthy to be called a good man, for I have done many wrong things in my day; and *never have I realized this* more sensibly than I do now! But, sir, the devil that was in me was never so black as he has been painted. And, sir, I wish to say that, before your coming, I heard that of *you* which inclined me in your favor; and I am glad to have seen and known you. Come and see us again—come when you may, and your reception will be such as it has been to-day."

And so the two men parted. Adair, mounting his horse, and waving with his hand an adieu to the ladies, rode off: Mingo on foot, taking long strides and leading the way.

Adair's mind was so occupied by the events of the day that it was some minutes before he spoke to Mingo. Then, after delivering Viney's message, he added: "And now, Mingo, you have heard that I think of buying you and Viney. Would you like me to do so?"

"Yes, Mahs Jo, bofe Viney an' me w'u'd be mit'y glad; an' I 'd do de best I c'u'd; an' I 'm shore I c'u'd

please yer. Viney an' me 's bin apart mos' ever since we was married ; and it 'ud be mi'ty good in yer, Mahs Jo, ef yer 'd buy us bofe, so 's we c'u'd be togeder."

" Mr. Anderson asks a big price for you, Mingo, but he may knock off fifty or one hundred dollars."

" Oh, Mahs Jo," pleaded the poor fellow, " please don't let de diffuns in de price keep yer frum buyin' me ! I 's got a little money now, and I 's shore I c'u'd make sum more, an' I 'd pay de diffuns myse'f."

" All right ! " was the kind reply, " I won't let the difference in price keep me from buying you ; nor will I require you to pay it. Viney is a good servant, and I will be glad to see you and her together. Besides, you once did my partner, Mr. Duncan, a great favor, which he has not forgotten, and he wants me to buy you."

" Thankee, Mahs Jo. An' my y'ung missus, she 's tol' me Mr. Duncan wus yer par'ner. An' Mahs Jo, I don' de bes' I c'u'd fur him ; kase, yer see, my y'ung missus, who 'as bin mi'ty good ter me, she tho't a mi'ty sight o' Mr. Duncan."

" And, Mingo, I can tell you, Mr. Duncan thinks a ' mighty sight ' of your young mistress ; and I 'm not surprised at it, since I have seen her. And, Mingo, you will probably see Mr. Duncan here in a few days, on a visit to her."

" Oh, Mahs Jo, 'scuse me ! but will it be safe fur him ter come here ? Dus Mahs Jim know ? "

" Yes, Mr. Wilson knows—I told him, to-day, all about Mr. Duncan being the same man who, under another name, stayed in his house several days, and what he came here for ; and Mr. Wilson has agreed to let him come and see Miss Catherine."

"'Scuse me, Mahs Jo, but did yous git Mahs Jim ter promis' dat?"

"Yes, I talked to him, and he afterwards had a long talk with his wife and daughter, and I 'm sure he will now be glad to have Mr. Duncan come."

"Well! I is glad ter hear dat. De day o' wunders aint over yit. An', Mahs Jo, please 'scuse me ag'in; but Mr. Duncan an' Miss Kitty, they 's likely ter marry aint dey? leastways I hope so, fur I thinks Mr. Duncan a mi'ty nice gem'man; an' I wants ter see my y'ung missus git a good husban' an' leave dis here place, kase dar 's a heap o' bad people 'round here."

"Yes, Mingo, I hope and believe they will get married; and, if so, your young mistress will get a kind, good husband; and, I am equally sure, she will make Mr. Duncan a good wife."

"Dat she will, Mahs Jo, dat she will! Miss Kitty is high spir'ted, but she don't ax, or 'spect, even frum a poor nigger, more dan is right."

A higher panegyric, so Adair thought, could not have been pronounced upon any lady than Mingo's upon his young mistress.

When in sight of Colonel Lovell's house, Adair halted; and, after receiving Mingo's messages to Viney, and his dutiful respects to Mr. Duncan, he handed him a dollar, which the black respectfully and gratefully received. Then taking Mr. Adair's extended hand, and with a warm "Good-by, Mahs Jo," started back with a light heart, and a step as firm and elastic as if he had but begun his walk.

Adair's reception by Colonel Lovell and his wife was all that hospitality, backed by a warm personal regard for their visitor, could suggest; but there was no dis-

play—no interruption to ordinary duties, and the visitor was made to feel at home. Soon after his arrival, Adair delivered the parcel and message from Mrs. Howard, and the note from Miss Wilson. The "news" from the latter, when told, was heard with delight by Mrs. Lovell, and she warmly congratulated Joseph on the part he had played in the matter. The Colonel had listened in his usually quiet manner, but said he was glad to hear the "news," that he doubted not it would lead to a happy marriage, and hoped it would have a good influence on Wilson.

"That reminds me," spoke up Mrs. Lovell, "that Kitty says, in her note, that her father has half-promised to go with her next Sunday and hear the Rev. Simon Wright preach at the Big Spring Meeting-house."

"Wilson subscribed very liberally," remarked the Colonel, "for erecting the building, but I have never known him to attend a meeting there. I would be glad to see him there. And, Joseph, I would be glad to see you there. Simon Wright is an able preacher, and would interest you. Besides, he wants to see and know you. He was with us an hour or more this morning, and mentioned a service you had rendered his father, whom he has now gone to visit, but will return and preach for us on Sunday."

"And Laura, too," said Mrs. Lovell, "would so like to hear Brother Wright" (brother in the same church) "and would be so delighted to meet Kitty, and hear the 'good news.' Now, Joseph, why can't you come by father's, and bring Laura down with you to the meeting?"

"A good suggestion," added the Colonel.

Adair was, in common parlance, "in a fix." He wished to see Simon Wright and hear him preach; the thought of bringing Miss Howard and Miss Wilson together pleased him; and it would certainly afford him pleasure to do anything to gratify Colonel Lovell and his wife. Moreover, to be asked by Mrs. Lovell to accompany her sister was an expression of confidence and esteem not to be lightly disregarded; the meeting was on Sunday, and he could not plead business engagements; and then, the fact was, he would like to take the ride with Miss Laura. On the other hand, the only objection that occurred to his mind was that it would be trying and hazardous—in a word, he was afraid; of course not afraid of Miss Laura, but of himself—afraid that he could not be thrown in her company alone and not tell her of his great——well, make some speech that he had been trying to resolve not to make. But duty and inclination alike demanded him to face the ordeal, and, after some hesitation, he replied:

"Yes, I would like to be at the meeting; and it would afford me much pleasure to have Miss Laura's company down."

"Oh," said Mrs. Lovell, "I want to write her a note for you to deliver or send, and I will urge her to come."

The following morning, soon after breakfast, Adair bade his kind friends good-by, and, mounting Ben Simon, rode away. The evening and the morning prayer of Colonel Lovell, and the quiet, happy family and playful children he had left behind him, occasionally occupied his thoughts; but neither the prayers, nor the family; nor the hills, valleys, and forest scen-

ery; nor the skipping squirrels, the fleet, wild turkeys, and bounding deer—some of which were often seen,—nor yet his official business which had brought him into the neighborhood and had yet to be attended to, could long win his rebellious thoughts from Miss Laura, and the prospective ride the next Sunday.

It was late in the afternoon when Adair, dusty and tired, dismounted at Squire Howard's.

The Squire, who was in the front yard, observing Adair's approach, met him at the front gate and said: "Ah, Joseph, both you and your horse look as if you had done a hard day's work. Come in and rest, and I will have your horse put up and fed. Can you not stay with us to-night?"

"Thank you, Squire," answered Adair, "but I must return to town this evening. Yet, as I remained with Colonel Lovell last night, and have some messages for the ladies, I will remain long enough to let my horse rest and be fed." He was ever more thoughtful about his horse—that he was well fed and cared for—than he was about himself.

Adair was conducted by the Squire directly to Mrs. Howard's room; and when he entered, unannounced—for the Squire was ever a thoughtless man in regard to matters of mere etiquette,—he found Mrs. Howard and her two daughters all busily employed. After the usual cordial welcome, and learning that Adair had been to dinner, the kind matron said to him: "Joseph, you must have had a hard day's ride, for you look tired."

"I have ridden a good distance to-day," he replied, "but, thanks to my good horse, I am not much fatigued; but I am very dusty, would like to wash my hands and face, and, if you will excuse me, I will walk

out to the block''—in the backyard—'' and have a wash.''

'' Very well,'' replied Mrs. Howard,'' you will find the pan on the block, and Ada will bring you a towel, etc.''

On the block—a section sawn from the trunk of a large tree, and used on washing days for batting clothing—Adair found a large tin pan, and filling it with water from the well, he pulled off his coat, and, throwing it upon the grass, was about to proceed with his ablutions when Ada, with a towel, soap, etc., came up. Looking around, she observed a letter upon the grass, near Mr. Adair's coat, and, picking it up, saw that it was addressed to '' Miss Laura Howard.''

'' Oh, ho ! '' she exclaimed, '' here is a letter for Sister Laura, which must have fallen from the pocket of your coat.''

'' Yes,'' replied Adair, '' that is one from Miss Wilson, and I am glad it was not lost, for I am quite sure it contains some news which will surprise and greatly please your sister.''

'' Oh, then, won't you let me run and tell her you have such a letter ? '' Ada imploringly asked.

'' You may take the letter to her, if you wish,'' he answered. And away ran the excited girl, leaving the towel, etc., on the block.

When Adair re-entered the room, Miss Howard had read the letter, and was somewhat excited by its contents. Her cheeks were tinged by a rich glow, and her pretty blue eyes brightened as she exclaimed : '' Oh, you have some strange and good news for me from Miss Wilson ! ''

'' Does not your letter tell you all you wish to know ? '' Adair asked.

'' No—no ! '' was the eager answer. '' The letter is

an interesting one, but has a postscript saying : 'All is changed, and I will request Mr. Adair to explain all, as I have not time to write.' "

" But here I have another letter for you, which may furnish you with the information you desire ; and, while you read it, I will deliver the verbal message I have for your mother from Mrs. Lovell."

Adair then turned, and talked for some time with the Squire and Mrs. Howard ; and not only delivered his messages, but answered a number of questions in regard to the Colonel and his family, and about the news of the Hurricane neighborhood.

As soon as there was a pause in the conversation, Miss Laura, addressing her mother, said : " This letter is from Sister Harriet ; and " — handing it to her— " you must read it. You will see she writes about all her children."

Mrs. Howard took the letter, and, while a general conversation was carried on by the Squire and Adair, read it, and noted a passage which ran thus : " The Rev. Simon Wright will preach at the Big Spring Meeting-house on Sunday next, at 11 o'clock A.M. Kitty Wilson will be there, and writes to me to try and get you to come. She, no doubt, wants to talk to you about the happy results of Joseph's visit to her father. He, Joseph, has promised Andrew and me to be at the meeting, and has said he would be happy to escort you if you wish to come. *Please Come.*" Mrs. Howard was by no means a scheming, match-making mother ; she was only a plain, straightforward, frank woman, and knowing Mr. Adair so intimately, and having such a warm regard for him, she did not hesitate to turn to him and say :

" Joseph, Harriet writes that you have promised

Andrew and her to be at the Big Spring Meeting-house on Sunday next to hear the distinguished Simon Wright preach. Harriet also asks Laura to come, as Miss Wilson, who will be present, wishes much to see her ; and that you have kindly consented to accompany Laura if she will go."

"So I did," replied Adair. Then addressing Miss Laura, he continued : "And, if you would like to go, I would be very glad to come by on Sunday morning and go with you."

"Thank you ; I would like much to go, and will be pleased to have your company. And now, Mr. Adair," Miss Laura added, "I must remind you of the explanation of Miss Wilson's letter I was to receive from you."

"I suppose, Joseph," interposed Mrs. Howard, "that is not for us all to hear ; and you and Laura can step into the next room."

There was no help for it ; destiny or something else was driving him along ; but on he went, apparently without reluctance, and was soon seated with Miss Laura alone, almost in the very spot where, the day before, he had seen her seated alone with Henry Rudolph. The effect was to recall vividly to his mind that scene, and the storm of emotions it had awakened in his breast as he rode away. This by no means served to increase his composure, nevertheless, with a pleasant smile and no outward indications of trepidation, he said to his attentive listener :

"Well, my message to you from Miss Wilson might be spun out into a long story, but its substance can be compressed into a very few words."

"Then, let it be a 'long story,' instead of a 'few words,'" she replied with persuasive earnestness.

"But the day is now far advanced," he rejoined in an apologetic tone, "and I am expected home. Besides, if a 'long story' should fully explain what Miss Wilson wishes to talk with you about, would you not then prefer not to take so long a ride as to the Big Spring?—for it is quite twenty miles there and back. And would you not then prefer that I should release you from your promise to go with me?"

"Mr. Adair," she answered,—and there was a shadow of pain on her face and in her tones, for it flashed upon her sensitive mind that possibly he wished to avoid the engagement,—"I really wish to attend the meeting; and had I been indisposed to take so long a ride, I should, at once, have asked you to excuse me. And if you promised to attend the meeting only to accommodate me, by your company, I hope you will frankly admit it, and I will certainly excuse you, as I know *you* have so much riding to do."

"My questions were perhaps awkwardly put, and may admit of such an interpretation as you seem to have given them; but, surely, Laura, you know I only meant to learn your wishes; and, now that I know them, I frankly tell you I will be glad to go with you."

He had spoken calmly and earnestly; had called her simply Laura, for the first time—had so called her naturally, perhaps unwittingly; and, although his words conveyed a slight reproof, they were pleasant to her ears.

"Forgive me, Mr. Adair," she quickly replied; "it was I that was perhaps awkward, if not unjust." Then, with a bright smile which dispelled all shadows she added, "But now for the message!"

"Will you excuse me if I give you but the substance

this evening," he said, "and leave the longer story, if you care to hear it, for Sunday as we ride along? And as the ride would be a long one for you, would you not prefer to go in a buggy? I will drive my old comrade, Ben Simon."

"As you like," was the gracious answer. "I would enjoy the drive ever so much; and it would, no doubt, be some relief to you, since you have so much riding to do. And I must be satisfied with the substance of the story at present; but I warn you that I will have a hundred questions to ask you on Sunday."

"Then, a drive it shall be!" responded Adair. Then followed a short, clear, and modest statement of his visit to the Wilsons, and its results. In conclusion he said: "Miss Wilson further requested me to say that, when Mr. Duncan visited her, she hoped to return with him this far, and spend a day or two with you."

Miss Laura had listened with almost breathless interest to the account given her; and when Mr. Adair had concluded, she said: "In visiting and talking to Mr. Wilson, as you must have done, you ran a risk few persons would have incurred for the sake of others. But you are back safely; and I am so glad you were able to remove the only barrier to the happiness of Mr. Duncan and Catherine. But, Mr. Adair," she added after a short pause, "I fear you have other risks to run. I am sure you will pardon me if I venture to warn you to be on your guard against Mr. Henry Rudolph. When you were here yesterday, he was here. I had received him as a gentleman, not knowing his true character. But he will visit me no more. After he had gone, a friend came to see me and told

me that about him which greatly surprised me, although I had never held him in much esteem. Then, too, Miss Wilson, in the letter you brought me, warns me against receiving him as a friend. I do *not* believe," she continued with emphasis, "*he* will ever show himself *your open* enemy, but I have reason to believe he may be your *secret foe*, and therefore would I *beg* you to be on your guard."

There was so much frankness and confidence in her words—such manifest interest felt in his safety, that Adair was thrown off his guard. "My dear Laura," he exclaimed, "I thank you for what you have said—for having spoken so freely to me of Mr. Rudolph. I know him to be a bad man. As an open enemy I should not fear him, nor do I apprehend any trouble from his machinations; but I promise you to be on my guard. We will talk over these matters fully on Sunday. I must now leave."

He felt that it was time he was going—that he was, in his then frame of mind, liable to be too demonstrative, and go he did—that is, into the next room; and after bidding all a more affectionate good-by than usual, he mounted Ben Simon, and, riding slowly along, unconsciously whistled a low, soft air.

And Miss Laura! She was left with a wildly fluttering heart, but more hopeful than she had been for many a day. Of course she did n't whistle, nor did she sing, for there was that observant, loving, teasing, pleading sister Ada, who wanted to know "all about it." And we expect she succeeded, for she was heard to say: "Oh, my! his saying 'Dear Laura.' But why did you let him stop? Why did n't you wind him up, and keep him going?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

Adair's Return Home—He Tells the Little Ones a Little Story—His Message to Duncan—He Visits Benton—Benton Rants about Another Young Grecian Hero—He Talks Seriously about the Mysterious Note.

WHEN Joseph Adair arrived at home and observed the sad, pale face of his sister, his conscience almost smote him for certain thoughts and hopes which, on his ride from Squire Howard's, he had permitted to linger in his mind. "No, no," he thought, "my home must be *her* home; and these little ones—bless their souls!—must be cared for and educated." And, as the little ones came around him, climbed on his knees, gave him their sweet little kisses, and reminded him of the tale he was to think up and tell them (which he had forgotten all about), he could but wish to be excused, and hurry off to see Duncan and deliver his batch of news; but no, he must keep his promise to the "chicks," and so it was arranged that he was to tell them the tale after supper.

While the brother, sister, and three children were at the table, the sad face of the widow was occasionally lit up by transient smiles, and the little ones were very good. Soon Viney came in with a fresh supply of nicely browned, hot waffles, of which she knew her

"Mahs Jo" to be very fond; and the master told her that he had seen Mingo, who was well; and that he would, before he went down to the shop, call at the kitchen and tell her of the message Mingo had sent her.

When the supper was over, the tale was told to the three eager little listeners. It was about three little boys—"just about your ages," he said, whose good mother had died, and whose father had gone away to a far country; that those little boys then lived with three old men, two of whom were blind; and how the old blind men could walk about, feeling their way along with their staffs; and how good they—the three old men—were to the three little boys. Then, that in a few more years, the three good old men passed away. Did they die? Yes; and the little boys did n't then have one home, but were separated, and how sorry they were! But at last they grew up to be men; and one of them lived away off in North Carolina, and was married, and had some children who were cousins of theirs; and another of the brothers was their father; and he—Uncle Jo—was the other and youngest of the brothers.

The little tale was not intended to be pathetic, but there were so many questions asked by the curious little ones, to some of which sad answers had to be given, and so it came about that, before the tale was ended, there were some little tears in the eyes of little ones, and some big tears in the eyes of a widowed mother, who had entered the room and heard a part of the little tale. And all this made the brother and uncle feel that it would be a relief to him if he too could shed some tears, but his eyes were dry and hot,

and after receiving three more little kisses, he arose and walked towards the kitchen.

Then there was the story to Viney, and although it was short and ended exactly as she had hoped and prayed it would, yet she too had much to do to keep her spectacles undimmed; but then her tears were tears of gratitude and thankfulness. Oh, how earnestly she thanked her "Mahs Jo," and told him how "shore" she was that he would never regret buying Mingo, for he—Mingo—was "a mi'ty handy man." But the master listened for only a few moments, and then walked rapidly towards the shop, where he found Duncan alone.

"Heigh, ho! back are you? And all safe and sound! And some news for me, I hope? Heigh?" was Duncan's salutation.

"Yes, Duncan," replied Adair. "I am back again, and have some news for you. But, as my story may be rather a long one, let us go to my room."

When the two friends were in Adair's room, a candle lit, and each of them seated, Adair took from his pocket-book the note from Miss Wilson, and, handing it to Duncan, said, "That will tell you my most important news."

Duncan at the first glance recognized the handwriting of Miss Wilson, and, hastily opening it, read the few lines it contained. At first there was a look of blank astonishment upon his face; then with a quick movement, leaning forward and looking fully in the face of his friend, "Adair," he gasped, "I don't—I don't fully understand! What does it mean?"

"It means," replied Adair very deliberately, "I presume, what I was authorized to say to you, namely,

that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, and their daughter, Miss Catherine, would be pleased to have you visit them as a friend, or, if you prefer it, as a suitor for the hand of the young lady."

"What!" exclaimed Duncan, springing to his feet. "Look here, old fellow! no joking! Is that Simon-pure earnest?"

"Yes, Duncan, Simon-pure," was the smiling answer.

"Yes, yes," ejaculated Duncan, "but still I don't understand."

"Well, sit down," said Adair, jocularly, "and keep cool, and I 'll tell you all about it."

Duncan obeyed; and, pulling out his handkerchief and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, said, "Yes—go on—tell me all about it."

Adair at once began his story—a plain, unvarnished account of his visit to the Wilsons. He was repeatedly interrupted by questions and exclamations. When he came to depict the scene where Miss Wilson, in the presence of her father and mother, advanced and delivered the verdict—the message he, Adair, was to convey to him, Duncan,—the latter, who had listened and questioned and shot out his exclamations with some degree of composure, could hold in no longer, and springing to his feet:

"Well done!" he exclaimed; and, after actually pirouetting half around the room, hurriedly took his seat and said: "I had to do it, to work off steam, or the boiler would have burst!"

When finally the story was ended, Duncan became thoughtful, even grave, and said: "And now, Adair, what shall I say to thank you? For if I knew every

word in our language, and exactly when and how to use it, I could not fully express what I feel."

"All right!" answered Adair, "you 've said enough, and can leave me to imagine the rest. Besides, I have another little matter to tell you about."

"Oh, yes, your visit to Miss Wilmot, and the warning to Miss Laura! I am anxious to know about that."

"Well, that is not what I had in my mind, but I may as well begin there. First, then, I did, yesterday morning, see Miss Wilmot; and, after I had spoken to her about Henry Rudolph, she thought, as we did, that Miss Laura should be informed of his true character, and proposed to go and see her that evening. After leaving Miss Wilmot, intending to be at Colonel Lovell's during the day, I rode by the Squire's, and who should I find there, talking to Miss Laura, but Rudolph! I confess it made me feel like exposing and denouncing him then and there! But I did n't. It was well, however, that I stopped, for not only had Mrs. Howard a small parcel to send Mrs. Lovell, but Miss Laura, learning that I was going to Mr. Wilson's, entrusted me with a letter she had written to Miss Catherine. And now I come to the 'other little matter' I referred to awhile ago."

Adair then related the conversation between Miss Wilson and himself regarding Rudolph, what her father had said to her about Rudolph, etc.

"The d—— villain!" Duncan hissed; then added proudly: "But Kitty understood him! And what reply did Mr. Wilson make to the wretch?"

"That I do not know; he did not perhaps inform his daughter. But I can tell you what reply she

requested him to make: 'Tell Mr. Rudolph, from me, she said, 'that if I were a slave he might have money enough to *buy* me, but not enough to induce me to become his *wife*.'"

"Bravo — bravo!" exclaimed Duncan. "But, Adair, you have not yet told me what you think of my Kitty."

"Well," said Adair, smilingly, "as I happen to have formed a very high estimate of her character and worth, I can risk the expression of an honest opinion. The varying shades of beauty are much a matter of taste or fancy; but that Miss Wilson is very attractive, both in form and features, few men would, I think, deny. That she is very thoughtful and intelligent, there is no doubt. But I can pay her no higher or juster compliment than to quote a remark Mingo made to me about her: 'My y'ung missus,' said he, 'hes bin mi'ty good ter me; she is spir'ted, but she don't ax or 'spect, even frum a poor nigger, more dan is right.' In other words, Duncan, I do most heartily congratulate you on having chosen such a young lady to be your wife, and on your having secured not only her esteem and confidence but her unbounded love; for she would go with you, Duncan, if need be, to the world's end."

Duncan grasped the hand of his friend and gave it a warm pressure. Then, after a short and thoughtful pause, he said: "And you saw and talked with Mingo, and will, I hope, be able to buy him."

In reply Adair informed him of his talk with Mr. and Miss Wilson on the subject, of Mingo's earnest desire to be with his wife, and of the promise he, Adair, had made to both Mingo and Viney.

"Well, well," said Duncan, "that 's more good news; and I 'm sure you will, as Viney says, find Mingo 'a mi'ty handy man.' But, Adair," he resumed, speaking with much feeling and earnestness, "there is one thing more wanting to fill up the measure of my satisfaction, and, upon an occasion like this, I am sure you will excuse me for referring to it. Inexpressibly happy as I am in my own love, and in anticipation of the full measure of earthly joy that awaits me, on the occasion of my unopposed union with Miss Wilson, I yet lack the assurance of seeing *you similarly* blessed."

"Thank you, Duncan, thank you." said Adair. "I know you wish me well. But I must wait; nor is it wise for me to encourage hopes, since it makes waiting all the more difficult. But, Duncan," he resumed, "I should tell you the Rev. Simon Wright is to preach at the Big Spring Meeting-house, on Sunday next. I am anxious to hear the great preacher; and, at Mrs. Lovell's suggestion, I came by the Squire's and asked Miss Laura to accompany me. She readily agreed to do so; and expects to see Miss Wilson there. We will drive down in a buggy. I should also tell you," he continued, "that at Miss Wilson's request, I informed Miss Laura of the success of my mission, and I assure you she was greatly delighted at the removal of what she said was the 'only barrier to the happiness of yourself and Miss Catherine.' Furthermore," he continued after a short pause, "it is now certain that what between Miss Wilmot's visit, and a letter from Miss Wilson, of which I was the bearer, Miss Laura's eyes have been thoroughly opened as to the character of Henry Rudolph, whom, it appears, she has never held

in esteem, and he will visit her no more. I am also now well assured that Miss Laura is not, and never has been, engaged to Warren Davidson, as I at one time considered certain. And now you see, Duncan, how the case stands. If my purpose was to try and win the heart and hand of Miss Laura, fewer obstacles present themselves than I have supposed, but I have made no effort to do so, for reasons heretofore stated to you, and which are of no less binding and restraining weight now than then."

Duncan felt that it was useless to argue the case; that his friend was not to be influenced in this matter by other's arguments or appeals; that Adair would continue to ponder over the matter as he had done; and that his final decision would be based on his own sense of duty. Besides, he, Duncan, thought the case was progressing slowly it might be, but favorably; and he anticipated happy results from that drive in the buggy to the meeting, and the stimulating effect of propinquity. "I am glad," he at last said, "that Miss Laura knows the good news from Wilsondom, and that Rudolph will annoy her no more. And," he added after a short pause, "should you see Kitty at the Big Spring, you will please say to her that I will try and be at her father's house on Tuesday morning next, about 11 o'clock. On my return here I will get ready as soon as I can to start on my journey to see my brother, with whom I purpose remaining about one week, and then return here with all speed. And I hope to get married as soon after my return as it may suit Kitty."

Adair promised, if he saw Miss Wilson at the meeting, to deliver his friend's message, and if not to send

her word through Colonel Lovell or his wife. And, after a few minutes' conversation about business affairs, the two friends parted for the night.

Adair's first care the next day was to see Judge Gilroy and secure the buggy for his drive on the following Sunday ; and, having succeeded in this, he went to the Clerk's office to make his friend Benton a short visit. He found that worthy hard at work—writing ; but, as soon as Adair entered, he threw down his goose-quill pen, and, springing to his feet, exclaimed :

" Ah, you 're the very man I want to see ! Know ye then that I have been strangely undecided, since you handed me that infernal, mystifying note, as to what I should do with this corporeal frame of mine—whether to find for it a quiet retreat from the cares, crosses, and contaminations, the toil, tumult, and turpitude, and the vice, vexation, and vicissitudes of this depraved, degenerate, and degraded life, in one of Holman's Caves ! And, hark ye ! he knows where there 's about sixteen of them in this amphitheatre of hills, in some of which no human foot but his hath ever trod ; and which are warranted to be comparatively free from ghostly visitants from the other world to haunt my ' guilty soul with dreams of lost delight.' Or, secondly, whether deliberately, and with malice prepense, to force the dissolving ingredient of life into this distempered, dwindling, and decaying body, and thus let the unfettered spirit free to wing its flight to——"

" This climate will suit you best," interposed Adair, " and Salem will suit your malady better than any of Holman's Caves."

" But, great Cæsar ! " exclaimed Benton, " can't

you see I 'm dwindling to a shadow, that the light of my eye is fading, and that my voice is becoming sepulchral in its tones? But," he continued, "think not, my friend, that my accumulated woes are *all* the result of that mysterious note. Nay—nay; but, sit down, and I 'll unburden my sorrow-sick soul to you."

"Well, up and out with it," said Adair, taking a seat.

"But, seriously, Adair, it is too—too bad, about—about—my poor brother," sighed Benton.

"What, Robartus? What 's the matter with him?" Adair anxiously asked.

"Yes, Robartus—poor Robartus!" groaned Benton. "He has gone and 'did and done' it again; let another ancient Greek into the family!—fact! it came yesterday. You know he named his first boy Leonidas; well, that was n't so bad; besides, the town boys soon shortened it into Lon. The next, you know, was named Miltiades; that had like to have been the death of me, but I recovered when the boys shortened it to Milt; and I am not without hope that the world will suppose his name to be Milton. But—this—last—poor—little innocent, with more than a mill-stone-of-name hung around him!"

"What has he named it?" Adair laughingly asked.

"E-pam-i-non-das; it 's a solemn fact!" answered Benton, wiping his eyes. "And just to think of it! I prepared a list of all the great American worthies from Christopher Columbus down to Henry Clay, but 'nary-a-one' of them would suit. Then I ransacked England, and suggested Burke and Pitt, and Spencer, Shakespeare, and Sheridan, but it was no go. Then, in desperation, I went as far as ancient Rome, and pleaded for Horace, Virgil, Cicero, and Cæsar, and even

mildly mentioned Pompey, but, sir, my pleading was in vain; it had to be Greek, and the more of it the better; and hence E-pam-i-non-das it was, and is, and is to be! And, sir!" he exclaimed, rising to his feet and waving his long right arm," this all comes from the recent landing of Lord Byron on the classic shores of Attica; and from the appeal of the Provisional Government of Greece to England and the civilized world for protection. When I made my last and most heart-rending appeal to Robartus to spare the child, he gazed sorrowingly at me, and, pressing his hand to his heaving bosom, said: 'What heart does not throb, what bosom does not heave, at the very thought of Grecian independence! Have you' (me) 'the feelings of a man? and do you not wish that the blood of Greece should cease to flow, and that the groans and sighs of centuries should be heard no more?' Then came brother Robartus' pathetic appeal: 'And shall the land of the Muses ask our help in vain?' 'No, brother Robartus,' I answered, 'the land of the Muses can have my last shin-plaster; but nary-a-child will I sacrifice on that altar.' I 'm sure brother Robartus has recently found that speech in some newspaper, memorized it, and knew more of it, but I stayed not to hear it; I was already too full for utterance. But now, to think calmly over it! With these three Greek heroes in the family, the battles of Thermopylæ and Marathon, and I know not how many more ensanguined fields, must be fought over again and again. And, sir, whilst this may perchance very remotely contribute to the independence of the 'land of the Muses,' where, oh where, I ask, is to come in the peace, the quietude, and the repose of the Benton family, and of your humble

servant in particular? For I will have to do a larger proportion of brother Robartus' work than ever, so that he may assist in nursing those Grecian heroes."

Adair laughed—and laughed heartily—at the quaintness and varying moods of his friend, and wondered what it all meant. After a Leonidas and a Miltiades, an Epaminondas in the family of the classical Clerk of the Court was not surprising. But Benton himself—was he merely acting? Was his serio-comico-farcico rigmarole an effort to cover the wound that mysterious note had made? But there was no use in mentally debating the matter, for Adair knew exactly how to find out; so, rising from his seat and picking up his hat as if he were about to leave, Benton at once said:

"Oh, hold on, Adair, don't go; and excuse my infernal buffoonery and hear me!"—and it was evident he was now speaking earnestly, seriously: "I could not see Holman until last night, when he and I sat on a log in his wood-pile and talked for an hour or more; mainly about that note. You know his peculiarities; however, he frankly told me his *impression* (his decided opinion, as I understand him) was that Walter Gowan had been deceived by Miss Ritchie; who, however, in the beginning might herself have been mistaken, or merely thoughtless and inconsiderate in receiving his advances as she did; or, lastly, that her feelings towards him may have undergone an excusable change after she became better acquainted with Gowan's temper and character. In conclusion, he said, substantially, what you did: that I should not condemn Miss Ritchie unheard; that I should be on my guard, weigh well any explanation she might give me, and carefully study her character before I sought

her hand in marriage. But, Adair, I must say, as I did to you once before, that in the beginning Miss Ritchie was, as most young ladies would have been, flattered by Mr. Gowan's attentions; that the suitor's wealth and great family connections caused Mr. and Mrs. Ritchie to warmly favor his suit; and, finally, that Miss Ritchie became engaged to him. Her subsequent discoveries, as to the temper and character of her affianced, caused her, I doubt not, the bitterest regret at the step she had taken; and this, followed as it was by Gowan's ungentlemanly conduct, fully justified her in breaking off the engagement; and, consequently, if any unhappy results have grown out of it, they should in no degree reflect upon her. But," he added, speaking with great earnestness and some emotion, "while these are my deliberate convictions, I must admit the matter has caused me much anxiety of mind, and hence my ranting when you entered about the Caves, etc."

"But, Benton, have you any idea when Miss Ritchie will return home?" Adair asked.

"I have not. But I have written her of the chief events that have occurred since she left here, and I hope soon to have an answer from her."

"I do hope," said Adair, as he rose to go, "that all will turn out well. In the meantime, however, take my word for it, you will find more relief in hard work than in anything else."

"I don't know," responded Benton, half jocularly, "but that your remedy is about as bad as the disease; however, I was trying it when you came in. O Life! thou art a——"

But Adair was off, and heard no more of Benton's aprostrophe.

CHAPTER XXV.

How Good News Affected Duncan—Little Anna's Journey—Holman's Unexpected Disclosures—Lost in the Woods—Mrs. Adair Questions her Brother Joseph—She Finally Obtains an Admission—Memory of Past Happy Days.

AFTER leaving Benton, to finish or not his apostrophe to Life, Adair went over to the shop to see Duncan, whom he found alone; but, instead of wearing a smiling face, he was looking more serious than usual; when, however, he looked up and saw Adair, smiling faintly, he said:

"Good-morning, and I hope you slept more last night than I did."

"What!" said Adair, "is that the way good news affects you?"

"Well, it never did so before," answered Duncan. "But the fact is, the news was so good and so unexpected, that, more than once while you were with me, I felt like dancing the hornpipe or a Highland fling; but, after you had left, I put on such a studying cap as I never wore before in all my life. And the more I think of it, the more solemnly serious this thing of getting married appears. But in all my thoughts there has been no admixture of regret for the step taken. On the contrary, my happiness is so complete as to be

entirely new to me, and hence unnatural. Yet, mingled with all, there is a feeling of distrust of myself—that I am unworthy of such a treasure."

"Well, I have just been over to see Benton," replied Adair, "and he, poor fellow, has the doleful dumps; and, although he made me laugh heartily at some of his speeches, I left him feeling a little depressed, and came over here expecting to find you in a great good-humor; but instead of a 'song' it has turned out a 'sermon.' However, that you take such a 'solemnly serious' view of marriage only convinces me that you are fitted to assume its responsibilities. But I must now leave you—am going to the country; and, should any one wish to see me, say I expect to return by sundown."

That evening Adair returned in time to give little Anna her ride; and, seated on a pillow in front of her uncle, and holding the reins, she succeeded in guiding Ben Simon—or the horse succeeded in making his way—to the trough at the town-well; and, after he had slaked his thirst, the journey was continued until the stable was reached. Then, of course, the "ole hos-see" had to be fed; and so the riders dismounted and made their way home on foot. When at home it took little Anna nearly as long to relate to her mother and sisters the wonderful incidents of her ride as it did to make the journey.

After supper Adair took a seat on the porch where he could look up at "The spacious firmament on high" (the first line of an old hymn by Addison which had been taught him in early boyhood by one of his old blind Quaker grand-uncles, and which he often repeated entire). He had, however, been seated only

a few minutes when Silas Holman came slowly walking down the street.

"Come in, Holman, come in!" Adair called out. "I want some one to talk to, and you are the very man."

As Holman entered, Adair brought out another chair, and soon the two were seated.

"Won't you light your pipe, Holman?" Adair asked. "I don't smoke myself, but I like to see others enjoy a smoke."

"I would, but I have no tobacco with me," Holman answered.

"That can be easily supplied, I think," said Adair; and, calling to Viney, who was in the kitchen, a few yards in the rear, he asked if she could not furnish Mr. Holman with some smoking tobacco. Now Viney, like most middle-aged and old negro women of that day—and white ones, too, for that matter—was fond of her pipe, particularly when the day's work was done, and she could sit down quietly and enjoy the soothing effects of the mildly narcotic plant. In answer to the master's call, Viney soon made her appearance with a small reticule containing a good supply of natural leaf, broken up into small fragments by being rolled, when dry, between the hands.

Holman having filled and lighted his pipe, talk went on for a few minutes about town and country matters; when, some reference having been made to their ride to the Gowans' farm, Adair remarked:

"And that little story, Holman, which you told me on our way, about poor John Dyer and his young wife Molly, has since been very often in my mind."

"Ah," sighed Holman, in his peculiarly deep but

musical voice, "that was a sad blow to me, for I liked John and Molly mightily! But," he continued after a short pause, "I have another little story which I don't mind telling you; and perhaps you ought to know it, for it may have some bearing on Benton's matters. He, Benton, and I had a talk last night about that note,—he came to see me,—and I told him my impressions much as I had told you; but I did n't say anything to him about the little matter I am now going to tell you, 'cause I was in doubt whether it would be best for him to know it."

"Some few years ago," Holman went on, "John Dyer and I hunted together one day, and we killed several deer. At night I stayed at John's. He, John, had told me of a turkey roost some mile or two north of his cabin, and I concluded I would go out next morning and see if I could n't kill a gobbler or two. I started before daylight, so as to get to the spot before the turkeys would fly down from their roost. John was engaged that morning in skinning and dressing the deer we had killed the day before, so I went on the turkey hunt alone. You, may-be, know that turkeys generally roost on the limbs of large trees near some hill. Their way is to pick out their tree to roost in, then ascend the hill until they are slightly above the level of the limb they have chosen, so that their flight will be an easy one. By daylight I was on the hill-top to the west of the trees where I expected to find the turkeys, so as to have them between me and the light; and, sure enough, I soon saw a dozen or more on one tree, got a good shot, and killed two—one gobbler and one hen. Scarcely had the report of my gun died away when I saw a man running towards me; it was Walter

Gowan. He was lost, and had been in the woods all night ; and, hearing the report of my gun, hastened to where I stood. I never saw any one so bewildered as he was ; at first he could hardly answer my questions. However, I soon learned that he had left home the evening before, hunting squirrels, and after killing several he started home, being certain that he knew the way. As twilight was coming on—and when he was perhaps within a mile of his farm—a coon started up near him ; he took after it, and it ran up a small tree. Not wishing to fire his last ball—which was in his gun —he walked around the tree for some time, trying to kill the coon by throwing stones at it. In the meantime night had come on ; and, being cloudy, he had no stars to guide him when he left the coon and again started home. It was then he must have taken the back track, and was soon completely lost and bewildered. After wandering about for several hours in the darkness, and hallooing until he was hoarse, he, by stopping the touch-hole of his gun and flashing powder in the pan, succeeded in kindling a fire, and was proceeding to cook one of the squirrels he had killed, but he was soon surrounded by so many fierce-barking wolves that he became alarmed and took to a tree for safety, where he was seated when he heard the report of my gun. I told him the way home, and gave him such instructions that, I thought, he could easily make his way alone ; but, so bewildered was he, that he declared he was sure to get lost again, and begged me to go home with him, offering to pay me liberally. You see, Adair, how little it takes to turn the head of a man—how little his boasted reason is worth. But, to go on, I went home with him. On the way he sev-

eral times said I must surely be going wrong, and when I finally pointed out to him his fields, beyond which was his house, he declared everything looked strange to him, and insisted on my going with him *to the house*, which I did. Once in his house, he soon regained his composure ; and, on my refusing to accept payment for my services, he was profuse in his thanks, asked me to take breakfast with him, which I did, and when I left he invited me to call and see him whenever I could. Such was my introduction to Walter Gowan.

"The next time I saw Walter Gowan," Holman continued, "I met him by accident down on the Smithland road near the Daniel's farm. He stopped me, appeared glad to see me—in fact, said I was the very man he wanted to see. He was perfectly sober, and soon explained that he was planning to elope with Miss Ritchie, and wished me to assist him ; said that he would require me only as a guide to a certain point on the Ohio River ; that he would there cross into Illinois, where the marriage ceremony was to be performed ; and he offered to pay me extravagantly for my services. I said to him that I could not understand why there should be an elopement, and that I hoped there was to be *no foul play*. He solemnly assured me there was to be none ; and, taking from his pocket a letter, he *urged* me to read it, saying that it was written by Miss Ritchie, and from it I would see that the opposition to the marriage came from Mr. Ritchie ; and that, notwithstanding her father's opposition, Miss Ritchie was willing to elope with him. I declined to read the letter, or to have anything to do with the elopement. That is all of my story—my only interviews with Walter Gowan."

"And it puts a new face on Benton's affair," said Adair, speaking slowly and thoughtfully. "He, I am sure, thinks that Mr. and Mrs. Ritchie did, at least in the beginning, favor Gowan's suit—that, in fact, they were mainly instrumental in bringing about the engagement. Nor has he, I suppose, any idea that she ever consented to an elopement, or ever contemplated such a step. He, Benton, has doubtless received his information exclusively from Miss Ritchie, and has based his opinions upon what she has herself told him. It now, however, looks as if she had misrepresented the facts to him! But," added Adair, "it appears she did at one time discard Gowan, and that he then acted very rudely and made some threats."

"Yes, so I have heard," replied Holman; "but the accounts of that interview, and the threats, were, I reckon, mainly, if not entirely, given out by Miss Ritchie. That she did at one time agree to elope with Gowan, in opposition to the wishes of her father, I am convinced, although, as I have said, I never read her letter. That she did afterwards change her mind and determine not to marry Gowan, looks certain from her having gone away. And it may be that she had good reasons for doing so, aside from the opposition shown by her father to the match. The discovery that Benton loved her may have had much to do with shaping her course. But my decided *impression* is that, in planning an elopement, Walter Gowan, up to the last, expected Miss Ritchie would willingly go with him. It was only when she had left—gone he knew not where, he realized that she had deceived him. And, to make matters worse, he soon found that he was generally believed to have intended and planned a gross outrage,

such as he had never contemplated. Hence his drinking and rash conduct."

"Too bad—too bad!" ejaculated Adair. "The whole thing looks clear; it certainly looks as if Miss Ritchie had deceived Benton on some points—misrepresented some facts,—and, if so, she is not worthy to be his wife. But, Holman, I am, as you are, in doubt as to whether Benton should know all these facts. In the first place, it is always a delicate matter to interfere between lovers. Then, you never read Miss Ritchie's letter to Gowan, and you have only his word as to its contents; but I feel sure, as you do, that he never would have made the statements he did, and thus left himself open to be contradicted by you on the spot, had you read the letter, as he no doubt thought you would. But suppose Benton should speak to Miss Ritchie about her letter to Gowan, and she should deny that any such letter was ever written, it would place Benton in an unfortunate position; for while perhaps doubting her word, he would have no means of disproving what she said. On the other hand, if she is, as I fear, unworthy to be the wife of our friend, it looks as if it would be wrong to let him go on blindfolded. It 's a matter that requires a good deal of thought."

"Well, that 's just the way I felt about it," said Holman. "You can think it over, and if you see clearly that it 's best to tell Benton, you can do so."

After Holman left, Mrs. Adair came out on the porch where her brother was seated, and at his request she took the vacant seat. She seemed paler than usual, and, to several of Adair's questions, she answered only in monosyllables. Presently, however, she seemed to shake off her timidity or reserve, and said: "Brother

Joseph, there is a matter that has come into my mind about which I wish to speak with you."

"Certainly, sister," Adair kindly replied. "I would like you to speak freely to me about whatever may interest you; for the better we understand each other — know each other's wants and wishes, — the better will it be for both. But I hope nothing has gone wrong, and that you have no fresh cause for trouble or anxiety."

"No; nothing has gone wrong with me, nor with the children. But, brother, I have recently noticed that at times you have appeared much lost in thought, and, occasionally, more than a shadow of sadness has passed over your face. I never observed this so plainly as I did last evening after you had told the children your little tale of the three little boys and the three old men."

"Oh, come, sister! You must not let my little humors cause you any trouble; if I thought you did, it would really trouble me. I did not expect the little tale would have taken so sad a turn, but the chicks asked so many questions, in their innocent way, to which answers had to be given, that some matters were mentioned I did not purpose referring to. Besides, I supposed my tale would be over before you entered the room, for I did not wish to distress you by recalling your afflictions."

"No, brother Joseph, it was not that you recalled my loss—which is rarely absent from my mind,—but what distresses me is that I fear you are unhappy."

"Oh, fie!" interposed Adair, speaking with assumed gayety. "It 's been many a day since I have had less to annoy and trouble me, in other words, more cause for satisfaction and contentment, than in the last day or

two; several matters that were troubling me having turned out exactly as I wished."

"I am glad to know it," was the calm reply, "but, brother, there may be other matters—and please hear me. I know you well enough to believe that you desire to keep from me, so far as you well can, your troubles, fearing they may cause me additional sorrow. Your father and his youngest son will soon be here, and I have been thinking of the great burden there will be upon your shoulders, and——"

"Humpty-dumpty!" exclaimed Adair. "Have n't I begged to be permitted to carry the load? It won't overburden me, but will only steady me; and I need some ballast. Besides, the more of us the merrier."

"Yes—yes! I know you would have it so for our sakes. But, brother, please hear me! There is one thing I wish to know—and for *your* sake."

Adair, who now saw how much in earnest his sister was, and wishing to allay any unnecessary anxiety she might feel, smiling, replied: "Well, speak out. You need have no fears of giving offence; and if I can relieve your mind of any trouble or anxiety, I will be glad to do so."

"Thank you, brother," was the low, earnest reply. "What I wish to know is this: Were you not, before William's death, thinking of getting married? and has not that caused some delay, or changed your plans?"

Adair was completely taken aback. He had never thought of his sister asking him such a question. His first impulse was, for her sake, to answer, "No"; but his next thought was, "That would be false." He could only resort to some subterfuge. "What," he asked, "ever put such a thought into your head?"

"Many things," was the steady answer. "You, brother, have reached, if you have not passed, the time of life when most men, who are as fond of a home and children as you are, desire to get married, and——"

"Oho!" exclaimed the brother, seeking an escape from his sister's question. "And have n't I got a home? and three little daughters? And when Dan comes I 'll have a son! What more should I want?"

"There is much lacking," persisted the sister. "And, brother, I see clearly that what I suspected is true! You would hide it from me because you would not have me believe that I and my children are a burden to you, and stand in the way of your marriage and fuller happiness. But this must not be."

"Now—now, no more of that!" exclaimed Adair, earnestly. "You don't stand in the way. Rather than give up you and the 'chicks' I 'd take a vow, without hesitation, never to get married. Besides, I don't know that I could get married if I wanted to. I never asked any young lady to be my wife; and, more than that, I never told one that I loved her."

The sister was silent for several moments. Joseph's assertions were so positive that for a time she thought she might be mistaken. But, with the known persistence of her sex in such circumstances, she could not be satisfied to remain in doubt—she must know more, must go to the bottom of the matter, even if she found a deposit of hidden sorrows which would add to her own unhappiness. "Joseph, my brother," she at last said, "I do not doubt a word of what you have said. But, excuse me, what you have said does not answer my question—does not tell me what I desire to know for your sake."

Adair was almost nettled by his sister's persistence; but he did not believe her to be actuated by an idle curiosity, and gave her credit for an honest desire to subserve his interest and promote his happiness; consequently he manifested no petulance in his reply.

"Why should you wish a more direct reply?" he asked. "Have I not told you I would vow never to get married rather than have you and your children leave me? But," he smilingly continued, "if you really wish to know, I will confess that I have been in love; at least I suppose that was what was the matter with me, and, of course, about that time, I did think, more or less, of getting married; but I did n't, you see."

"Brother Joseph," she replied, and her voice betrayed some emotion, "I fear you have misunderstood my motive in questioning you. It was no desire to pry into your secrets. I believe that you would vow never to get married—that you would sacrifice your chance to secure the fullest measure of happiness this life can afford, if it were necessary to enable you to discharge what you regard as a duty to the widow and children of your lost brother. But, if you were in my place, would you be satisfied to remain passive? Would you have me appear so ungrateful to yourself? Would you not have me *want* to do something—*try* to do something, to make you happy? And, O brother, think of it! it is not you and I alone, nor my little ones, nor your father and Daniel! May there not be—is there not *another* who may be rendered unhappy?"

Her voice had, as she proceeded, become more tremulous, and there were tears in her eyes. Her brother had never heard her make so long a speech, or such a

forcible appeal. But he wished to dry up her tears rather than add to them, and so he assumed a cheerfulness he was far from feeling.

"Come, come, sister!" he said. "On my word, I never doubted your good motives in questioning me. I 'm sure, too, you are anxious to promote my happiness in every way you can. But I don't exactly understand what it is you would have me do. You surely don't want me to rush off and get married. And who is the young lady who will be disconsolate if she does n't get me?"

"Ah, brother," she answered, with an effort at pleasantry, but there were still traces of tears, "I see how it is, and will question you no further. You know I would not have you rush off and get married. What I wish is that you may feel *free* to get married, if you so desire. Nor do I certainly know who the young lady is who would be 'disconsolate,' but I could probably guess."

Men have passed through a battle unscathed and then been wounded by a stray shot or a spent ball; others have tripped and fallen just before finishing what would otherwise have been a successful race. So it was on this occasion. Adair had parried his sister's questions—had done so from the purest and most disinterested motives, and now, after the struggle was over—after she had said "I will question you no further," that stray shot—that she "could probably guess"—struck him. He did not wish his sister to feel that he had withheld his confidence because of any distrust; he wished the subject-matter laid aside with some show of pleasantry and good humor. If he had not been the grave and earnest man for which

he had credit, we might suspect there was a germ of that peculiarly feminine quality known as "curiosity," excited by the sister's closing remark. But be this as it may, he laughingly rejoined: "Well, give us an idea at your skill at guessing." No sooner, however, had he uttered the words than he wished he had not done so.

The sister's reply was prompt: "'Miss Laura Howard would be my first and my only guess."

Adair was at first surprised, then thoughtful, and finally—it must be confessed—curious. "Why, sister," he at last said, "what can you have seen or heard to have put such an idea into your head?"

"Oh, now you would question me!" she answered, and there was something like pleasantry in her tone; and one of her long disused smiles lit up her pale face and made it look younger. "But," she continued, "you must first tell me if I have guessed correctly."

"There is no getting around it now." So at first thought Adair, nevertheless he would try. "Of course," he replied, "I think a great deal of Miss Howard, as I do of every member of my old friend's family. In fact I know of no young lady for whom I have a higher regard. But why you should so link my name with hers is more than I can understand."

"Because of what you, yourself, said to me, or in my presence, in the olden happy days, the memory of which was revived and vividly recalled last evening when you were telling your little tale to the children. Brother! you cannot have forgotten William's repeated allusions to the 'baby,' and your trip to Knoxville?"

In a moment Adair recalled the fact that, years before, when he had passed so much of his time in the

pleasant little cottage home of his brother William and his fair young wife, he was often questioned about getting married. And William (who was, like his father, the Dashing Tom Adair of old, full of fun and jollity) had liked to joke his younger brother, and often spoke of and laughed over Joseph's romantic attachment to the Howard "baby"; of the long trip he, Joseph, had made to Knoxville to see the Howard family, and to get another peep at and possibly another kiss from that "dear blessed baby." And then he, William, would tell his young wife of how he had found Joseph in Knoxville, and of what a long, lean, sad face he had because he missed his "baby." He, Joseph, now also recalled how his sister had always tried to shield him from William's jokes, by telling him he must hunt up that little girl, and that she was sure he would find her some day, and his constancy be rewarded. The memory of those olden days, that fond, cheerful brother, that happy young wife, those pleasing, trusting, confiding chats, came back to him like strains of soft, sweet music from afar borne across deep and quiet waters. Then, too, he and his sister had of late often spoken of the Howards, and she knew that this was the same family he had known and loved so much in boyhood; and that it was to the Squire's he had gone, as to a home, after his long illness. There could then no longer be any disguise. And the brother told the story of his love, his hopes, fears, struggles, resolutions, and silence. And the sister listened with deep and kindly interest, and ere they parted for the night she said:

"I knew I had a kind and good, but never before what a noble brother I have. And a load has been

taken from my heart. I want to see you as happy as you richly deserve to be. I have seen Miss Laura, and I like her very—very much. I know that Mrs. Howard regards you almost like a son ; and I know that the daughter greatly esteems, and I hope loves you. Win her heart and hand if you can, my brother, and may God speed you ! Get me a little cottage that I and the children may be near you ; and Daniel, when here, can make his home with me for company and protection ; and you and Laura can retain this house. When my health has improved, I can teach school and be less of a burden to you."

And Adair, the grave, resolute, but compassionate man and brother, replied : " I don't know ! I don't know ! Even such a parting from you and the children would be painful to me. I will think about it ; but there must be no school for you to teach."

And after a warm grasp of the pale, thin hand, and a kiss of sincere affection, he said, " Good-night," and was gone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

How Time Flies—Adair at Squire Howard's—Ada's Humor—Adair and Miss Laura's Drive to the Meeting-house—They Meet Miss Wilson and her Father—Comments of the Crowd—Mr. Pennyman—Rev. Simon Wright—James Wilson and his Daughter.

TIME flies only when the heart is light and joyous; for then we make no note of its unvarying march of sixty minutes to the hour, and twenty-four hours to the day. It oftener seems to move with "measured step and slow," and lag as if 't were weary with the never ceasing strain. But it takes no note of joy or sorrow, of patience or impatience, and only obeys the standing order: "Steady! forward, march!"

To Joseph Adair time seemed to drag until that Sunday, to which he looked forward with impatience not unmixed with anxiety, at last came round. The day came bright and beautiful. There was no bald and brazen sky; the cerulean background was dashed here and there by cirrus and cumulus clouds, which floated so gently on the wings of the wind as to form a gorgeous panorama.

Adair, as he drove Ben Simon in the buggy from Salem to Squire Howard's, had much to think about,

and he did think, and think seriously ; for he realized that the day might prove an epoch in his life. And yet the more he thought the more in doubt he seemed to become. He certainly had no settled purpose to tell Miss Howard the story he had so long kept secret from her. He remembered what Duncan and what his sister had said ; but, in a matter of such importance, he felt that he should be governed by his own convictions of duty. But what served more than all else to darken his pathway and render his steps uncertain, were the doubts he still entertained as to the nature of Miss Laura's feelings for him. She had ever been so timid, so reserved when in his company alone, that he could not rid himself of his old impression that she dreaded lest he should make a declaration which would be useless and sorrowful to them both.

An hour's drive brought him to the Squire's house. He never was more cordially received. Miss Laura had never looked so beautiful ; her rapidly beating heart had given a warmer coloring, a richer tint, to lips and cheeks.

As for Ada, never before was she in a more humorous and teasing mood. " It was very kind of you," she said, addressing Mr. Adair, " to come out and take sister Laura a-driving ; but if you had brought a buggy with seats for three, and taken me along, it would have been a great deal nicer."

" What ! would you like to go ? If so, we might wedge you in," replied Adair.

" No, thank you," Ada answered, " that buggy seat looks hardly wide enough for two ! Besides, I 'm not grieving on my own account, but only for you and sister. Everybody knows you two don't know how to be

entertaining when you are alone together; and I 'd only like to be along so as to wind you both up and keep you ticking."

"Oh," said Miss Laura, blushingly, "you don't know how much we talk when you are not present to distract us with your rattle."

Ada's only reply was a merry little laugh, and then, "Oh, look yonder!" she exclaimed, pointing to a lunch basket which was to be put in the buggy. "That basket," she went on, "contains enough provisions to last you two for a week, but you are not expected to wander around and remain away until you eat it all. No, you young and giddy folks" (indicating Mr. Adair and Laura by a movement of her head and eyes) "must remember that there are other people in the world besides yourselves, and that most of them require some substantial victuals. So, when the preaching is over and the eating begins, you can reserve a pickle and a chicken wing apiece, and divide out the remainder. And, Mr. Adair," she added, with mock gravity, "you must pay marked attention to the preacher, and not let your mind go skipping around about Betsy, Jane, and Susan."

"I will remember your instructions," replied Adair, "and do my best to follow them. But should my mind get to skipping around, as I fear it may, I hope there will be no harm in my thinking of *you*."

"Oh, none whatever," answered Ada, "*provided* you don't let sister Laura know anything about it."

"Oh, you tease!" exclaimed Miss Laura, good-humoredly.

"And you may rely on my discretion," rejoined Adair.

When Adair and Miss Laura were seated in the buggy, and Mrs. Howard and Ada standing near, "Oh, Mr. Adair," said Ada, "you must be exceedingly careful in driving—keep your eyes looking ahead, and not over your left shoulder; for, should any accident happen to that sister of mine, I would never forgive myself for having permitted her to go on such a venturesome trip with you. And now, good-by, my children, and don't forget that my heart will be all in a flitter-flutter until you are safely restored to my arms. Oh! that is, *one* of you."

"And which one?" shouted Adair, as soon as his laughter subsided; but it was too late to get an answer, for Ada had bounded away towards the house.

It must be confessed that Miss Laura Howard and Mr. Joseph Adair were slightly embarrassed as they drove off; but they both did their best to hide it by talking at first of the weather, the roads, and then of Ben Simon. After a little while, however, their seats were properly adjusted—they got the swing of the buggy, got used to the situation generally, and less apprehensive of any damage from slight bumpings of the shoulders; for, really, the seat of the buggy was rather narrow.

When their embarrassment, or perhaps, more properly speaking, their agitation or perturbation had in a measure subsided, Miss Laura ventured to remind Mr. Adair of the Duncan-Wilson case.

"Ah! Mr. Adair," she said, "you will remember that I got only a very brief account of that fortunate visit of yours, and that I warned you I would have a hundred questions to ask you to-day."

"Yes," he replied, "but you will no doubt see Miss

Catherine to-day, and she can tell you all much better than I can."

"Oh, I can accept no such excuse. I may not see Catherine; but if I do, there may be no chance for private conversation. Besides, you were entrusted by her with a message to deliver to me, and you have not fully discharged that duty. Furthermore, there are certainly some parts of the story with which you are much better acquainted than she; and I am sure you can tell the story as I wish to hear it told."

After such a pleasing little speech, Adair could only say, "Well, then, question away, and I will answer you the best I can."

"Nay—nay!" she rejoined, "that is not the way to proceed. You begin at the beginning, and tell me the entire story; and if, as you proceed, there is anything I do not understand, or wish to know, I will then question you."

"Well, I am in for it," said Mr. Adair, jocularly, "and so here goes!" Then followed a detailed account of his visit to Mr. Wilson's, so far as it referred to Mr. Duncan and Miss Catherine. He, however, omitted any mention of the indirect influence of the Rev. Simon Wright in shaping the course of events. And there were many questions asked, and some of these opened up other topics or side issues, and thus the conversation went on with a free and easy flow. And there was some talk about Mr. Rudolph, and Mr. Brantley, and Miss Wilmot; and so it happened that the two hours occupied in driving to the Big Spring Meeting-house passed very swiftly.

When they came in sight of the square log building and saw the horses hitched to the lower branches of

many of the surrounding trees, and the gathering crowd around the Meeting-house, they both felt that they wished the distance had been greater ; for theirs had been a communion both of mind and heart. They had talked not only about persons and personal matters, but their conversation had occasionally flowed into graver channels, and there had been a frank and free expression of views, feelings, and sentiments. Long and intimately as they had known each other, they never before had talked so freely and unreservedly. And, it is but truth to say, each had risen in the other's estimation ; for theirs had been companionship of the highest, purest order, in which mind and heart had whetted and sharpened mind and heart, and brought out all the charms of social intercourse.

After alighting from the buggy, Adair proceeded to unfasten the traces and take his horse from the shafts. No special precautions were necessary in hitching Ben Simon, for he had none of the special vices of many country horses, such as breaking or slipping their bridles, and leaving their owners to return home on foot. This done, Adair looked around and saw Miss Wilson approaching ; for she knew the road by which he would doubtless come, and had been on the lookout for him and her friend Laura. The young ladies were soon in each other's arms and exchanging greetings and kisses. Then Adair came in for his proper share of Miss Wilson's greetings.

" One little message," Adair half-whispered in Miss Wilson's ear, " from George ! He will be at your father's house on Tuesday next, about 11 o'clock A.M., to see *you*."

" And is he well ? " she blushingly asked.

"Yes, well, and the happiest man south of the North Star!" he answered.

"And you, Mr. Adair, you have had a pleasant drive, I hope?" And this Miss Wilson said quite loud enough to attract Miss Howard's attention.

"I have been told," he answered, "that the distance from the Squire's here is ten miles, but, really, it has not seemed, at least to me, half that far."

"And you, Laura," said Miss Catherine, addressing her friend, and giving her a peculiar glance, which was doubtless well understood, "what think you of the distance from your father's house here?"

"That the road was so smooth, and my drive so very pleasant, I neither took note of time nor miles," was Miss Laura's prompt and pleasing answer.

"My thanks, then," responded Adair, "to the road, Ben Simon, and the buggy."

"And *mine*," rejoined Miss Laura, "more particularly to the driver. But," she continued, addressing Miss Catherine, "do you know whether brother Andrew and sister have arrived?"

"Yes; they are down near the Meeting-house."

"And your father, is he here?" Laura asked.

"Yes; that is he standing *alone* under yonder tree," answered Catherine; and, as she pointed to the lone man, a shade of sadness passed over her face.

"Then you must introduce me; for I have never seen him before."

This seemingly natural and simple request of Miss Laura's caused Adair the liveliest pleasure, and Miss Catherine was deeply touched by it; and, with some emotion, replied, "Thank you, Laura, for giving me so much pleasure."

Mr. Wilson was alone. There were many men and women near him, but none with or speaking to him. Many a furtive glance was directed at the erect and portly man, who stood apart, his hands clasped behind his back, and his eagle eyes roaming somewhat restlessly from one group to another. He had not observed his daughter's approach until she was near enough to speak.

"Father!" she said, "this is my friend, Miss Laura Howard, who has kindly asked me to introduce her."

There was an immediate softening of the stern outlines of his burly face, a more humane expression about those deep-set gray eyes, as he extended his hand and said, slowly and distinctly repeating the name interrogatively, "Miss Laura Howard? I thank you for the honor you have done me. I am glad to see you; glad to know you. I have long wished to thank you for your great kindness to my daughter."

"Mr. Wilson, in your daughter I have found a friend and congenial companion; and I have as much reason as she to be thankful that we know each other so well," was the calm, frank, and kind reply.

"And you, too, Mr. Adair, you here?" said Mr. Wilson, grasping with much warmth the extended hand. "Well, this *is* an honor and a pleasure."

"Yes, sir," answered Adair, "and I am glad to meet you again. I had the pleasure of driving down with Miss Howard."

"Well done!" responded Mr. Wilson. "Then you must have had a pleasant drive. But did you bring along that——"

"That partner of mine?" interposed Adair, observing him to hesitate. "No, he did not come. But,"

he added, after glancing at Miss Wilson, "he intends making you a visit on Tuesday next."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Mr. Wilson. Then, addressing Miss Howard, he added: "And you, Miss Howard, I suppose you know this partner of Mr. Adair's?"

"Yes, Mr. Wilson," was the earnest answer, "I know Mr. Duncan well, and greatly esteem him as a gentleman and friend."

In the meanwhile many in the surrounding assembly were curiously noting our group of four.

"Why," said a town-looking young man with a very long upper lip and a cocked eye, "that 's Adair, the Deputy Sheriff talking to Jim Wilson; seems to know him very well. Rather strange, I should say, to be seen publicly talking to such a man."

"Oh," said another, a loose-jointed countryman with a hare-lip—or what appeared such, but the slit may have been occasioned by the "kick" of a gun—"I s'pose the Depity don't want Wilson to have no grudge ag'inst him. He 's kinder keepin' on the right side o' the old feller."

"And," said a third, a spruce young farmer, whose long foxy hair was profusely greased, or larded, or buttered, "who in the world is that tarnation sniptious-lookin' gal with the Depity?"

"Oh," answered "hare-lip," "that 's one o' the darters o' Squire Howard, the celebrated survey'r what lives up jist this side o' Salem. An' she is sniptious an' no mistake!"

"Should n't wunder," said "greasy-head," "if that Depity was kinder sotten up ter that bundle o' dry-goods. But, dash my hide, if I ever seed enny chap

with sich black har' ! it kinder sets off his homely face.''

"Ah," said "cock-eye," jocularly, "there 's no chance there — no chance there for you, with that 'bundle of dry-goods.' The black locks would beat yours any day."

"Well," was "greasy-head's" drawling rejoinder, "I aint sot in that direcshun ; I aint a-shootin' at that mark !"

"An' lor' bless yer !" said old Mrs. Martha Long—who was very short and fat—to her neighbor, the young widow Styles—who was all smiles—"jist look at that Wilson gal ! Aint she rigged up ? An' she hangs round that old brute, her fayther, as if she was proud o' him. An' that tuther one with her ? wunder who she is ; looks sorter nice, but she can't be much, bein' with that Wilson gal."

"Oh, Aunt Marthy," replied the smiling widow, "yer mus' n't be too hard on the girls for dressin' up ; they all likes ter do it. An' that black-haired man what 's with 'um ? Wunder who he is ?"

"Yes ; I 'll be bound fer you, Penelope," replied "Aunt Marthy," "it 's the men, an' not the wimmin you 're arter."

The smiling widow's reply was interrupted, for at that moment public attention was attracted to Colonel Lovell and his wife, who were approaching the group of four. And there was soon such a hand-shaking and kissing among the ladies going on, that Jim Wilson rose somewhat in public estimation ; for every one knew the quiet little Colonel, and had something to tell about his daring deeds as a soldier, or his works and quiet ways as a farmer and neighbor.

But now the hour for preaching had nearly arrived, and, as the preacher had not yet come, every one was on the lookout for him. And soon the words went round : " He 's come ! " " That 's him ! " and " Thar he is ! "

Simon Wright, punctual almost to the minute, had come. He walked rapidly from where he hitched his horse to the Meeting-house, near the door of which he met Colonel Lovell, whom he greeted warmly ; and, after speaking a few words in an undertone, passed on into the Meeting-house and ascended into the small box-like pulpit ; after which he knelt for a few minutes in silent prayer. Then, rising, he took from his coat pocket a small Bible and a hymn-book, which he placed upon the ledge of the pulpit.

The congregation were in the meanwhile entering and finding seats on the rude benches with which the room was well filled. It was observed by many, particularly among the young men, that the beautiful Miss Howard took a seat beside Colonel Lovell and his wife, near to but on one side of the pulpit ; while Miss Wilson was seated by her father, and Mr. Adair immediately in their rear. As was customary, while the congregation were entering and being seated, some familiar hymn—for not one in twenty of those present had hymn-books—was " raised." This somewhat difficult and embarrassing undertaking in most country churches was performed by one James Pennyman, a well-known character then and for many years afterwards.

Mr. Pennyman, who was now some thirty-five to forty years of age, tall, raw-boned, and angular, was an honest but close-fisted farmer, and widely known as passionately, yea, almost extravagantly, fond of music.

Much as he loved money, and almost miserly as he was in his habits, yet he would in some measure neglect his farm, everything, to teach a "Singing School." He would ride long distances, undergo fatigue and exposure, without fee or reward,—if necessary,—for the sole purpose, as he expressed it, of "disseminating a knowledge of psalmody." His knowledge of music was considered by most of the rude country boys and girls—and by many of the old folks as well—as something wonderful; for it was not necessary for him to "hear a tune" in order to learn it, but he could "sing it off at once, from the dots and dashes in his psalm-book,"—some of which he always carried about with him for sale at a reasonable price.

Mr. Pennyman had at one time, perhaps, a good voice, but from some cause or other—perhaps over-use—it was now a little cracked; but it possessed considerable compass, and he had much skill as a leader in keeping a mixed congregation in unison. And so often had his services, at meetings like this, been called into requisition, that now, although he was a comparative stranger in the Hurricane neighborhood, he at once assumed the position of leader. We should add that Mr. Pennyman was a member of the Baptist Church, whereas the Rev. Simon Wright was a Methodist; but they had been friends in boyhood, and Mr. Pennyman had ridden that morning a distance of about fifteen miles to hear his old friend, who had become so distinguished as a preacher.

The opening hymn on this occasion was that beginning:

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heav'nly Dove,
With all Thy quick'ning powers,"

and scarcely had the first line been sung, when the shuffling of feet and the moving of benches ceased, and quiet, other than the singing, reigned ; for a female voice of such wonderful clearness, sweetness, and melody joined in the singing that all eyes were at once turned towards the young lady who sat beside Colonel Lovell. Mr. Pennyman's face brightened up, and he sang to suit and accompany that voice. Even the minister looked down from the pulpit to see who was giving utterance to such sweet notes. Yet all unconscious of the notice she was attracting, Laura Howard sang on until the last line of the hymn died away in melody.

Then the minister rose and said, " Let us pray." At first the transition from the sweet notes of the singer to the harsh voice of the minister was almost painful. But, as the prayer ascended, all ears were soon attentive. It was in the ordinary phraseology of the people ; was addressed not *to* the people, but to the Great Father *for* His children, and for light and wisdom from above that he—" the servant "—might speak aright to those present. Then came the reading of a short lesson from the Old and one from the New Testament ; afterwards the minister said : " O come, let us again sing ; let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation. And," he added, " I will ask brother Pennyman to lead us in singing the hymn commencing

> " There is a fountain filled with blood
> Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

Mr. Pennyman, thus addressed, knew that his former friend had recognized him. It was a proud and happy moment for Mr. Pennyman. He was no longer the mere leader ; he was now the precentor ; and rising

from his seat, and facing, as well as he could from his position, the congregation, and casting a glance at Miss Howard, whom he knew, as if appealing to her for assistance, he began. And again that clear, sweet voice joined in ; and there were other good voices, male and female, that helped to swell the volume of praise. The effect was thrilling ! Mr. Pennyman was never better pleased ; the enthusiasm of the moment had helped him—he had surpassed himself, and Miss Howard had more than seconded his efforts.

Then came the sermon. The preacher was now about forty years of age, tall, erect, large-framed, and muscular. His bushy hair and heavy eyebrows, his wide forehead, deep-set eyes, and square jaws, at once reminded Adair of the striking likeness of the son to his father, Elijah Wright. Mentally and morally, Simon Wright was a masculine reproduction of his noted mother—the old pioneer, Polly Wright.

Surrounding circumstances were enough to arouse the preacher's enthusiasm. He was in his native county, from which he had been absent—except an occasional short visit—for many years ; he had in the last day or two met some friends whom he had known in his boyhood, but much the greater number of those he had then known had been mown down by the Grim Reaper ; he had that morning stood by the lone grave of his mother on Bizzell's Mount, and had parted from his aged father whom he never expected to see again this side of the grave. These things had depressed the human heart of the man, and he knew he could best find relief in the glorious work of his office. And there, before him, was James Wilson ! whose character he well knew ; he knew, too, the reputation of the

neighborhood—of the Cave and its reputed band of outlaws, several of whom might be present ; and his heart, like that of his Divine Master, was moved with compassion, not only for the law-abiding, but for the depraved, the outcasts. All this was enough, and more than enough, to arouse him ; and, as there was much more of the lion than of the lamb in his nature, he girded himself as for a mighty contest.

As the preacher progressed in his sermon he seemed to grow taller and taller ; his massive chest seemed to expand ; his voice, at first somewhat harsh, soon became clear, full, and sonorous ; his enunciation was distinct, and his gestures natural and expressive. There was no apparent effort at oratory—or mere effect, no persuasion, little pathos. It was a giant aroused and in terrible earnest, struggling against the great Enemy and for Man.

When the sermon was ended, the preacher descended from the pulpit, and, standing upon the floor in front of it, said :

" In a few hours I must resume my journey ; leave this my native county and State for the distant field of my labors. I would be greatly rejoiced if, before leaving, I could know some wanderer wished to enter upon the ' way '—the ' path '—which I have commended. And now," he continued, " if there are any present who wish to avail themselves of this ' accepted ' moment—to ' choose ' now whom they will serve, and to ' confess,' before others present, their need of a Saviour, let them show their honesty and sincerity—make their public confession, by coming forward and kneeling at this bench, our altar. And when we have prayed with and for them the congregation will be dis-

missed. And I would again request Brother Pennyman to lead us in singing the hymn commencing

"Alas, and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?"

And while this hymn is being sung, let any one who would surely escape the *hurricane* of God's wrath, and follow the path blazed by our Guide and Saviour, come promptly forward."

There was a moment of silence. Then the hymn was begun ; and the voice of Mr. Pennyman was at its best, and that of Laura Howard was touched with a tenderness and pathos it had rarely, if ever, known. Fewer persons joined in the singing, preferring rather to drink in the sweet sounds and look on and see who would approach the altar.

The astonishment—the thrill of excitement which ran through the congregation can scarcely be imagined when it was seen that Miss Wilson was the first to arise, and, after walking slowly and calmly to the altar, kneel down. And behind the daughter walked her father, the notorious and dreaded Jim Wilson ; but he knelt not ; he stood near his daughter, looked alone at her as she knelt, his arms folded across his broad chest, which slowly rose and fell as if moved by a mighty tide ; but no sigh, no groan, no tears escaped him. A moment later, and a half dozen or more knelt at that rude altar. Then, whilst yet the hymn was being sung, the minister, observing Mr. Wilson, stepped to his side, and, placed his hand gently upon the father's shoulder :

"And you, James Wilson," he said in a low voice,

" is it not time that you, too, should kneel there—beside your daughter ? "

There was a sudden flash of Wilson's eye, but he replied in a calm, low voice, " No, sir ; not yet ! I have one more settlement to make ! "

Alas, alas, for the delay !

The singing soon ceased. Then there was a prayer —and such a prayer as few in any congregation ever listened to, and many hearty " Amens " ascended as it closed.

Before dismissing the congregation, Mr. Wright, after a few words with Colonel Lovell, announced that he was pleased to learn a ministerial brother, of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Richard Freeman, was present, and would preach for them at three o'clock that afternoon ; that there were on the grounds ample provisions for a luncheon for all who chose to remain, and he hoped all would do so who could.

Then the benediction, and the congregation slowly retired ; Miss Wilson leaning on the arm of her friend, Laura Howard.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Basket Dinner—Joseph Adair and Simon Wright—Rev. Mr. Freeman—Adair and Miss Laura on their Return—The Story he Told her—Long-Delayed Confessions—True Love.

IN half an hour, or less, after the services of that Sabbath morning had closed, the Big Spring, which was but a short distance from the Meeting-house, was surrounded by groups of men, women, and children. Many were seated upon benches brought out of the School-house, which was near by, and others upon the grassy ground; and before them were spread, upon clean white cloths, such an abundance of cold provisions that all could be supplied. There was corn-bread, light bread, and biscuits, broiled and boiled ham, broiled chickens, dried beef and venison, dried peach and apple pies, pickles, etc. In fact, the company seemed to be having a most sociable and enjoyable picnic.

Miss Wilson and Miss Howard, after leaving the Meeting-house, passed some time alone, conversing tenderly of what had just transpired around the altar, and then joined Mr. Wilson and Mr. Adair. The four lunched together and had something to share with others out of the contents of the basket Mrs. Howard had provided. Colonel Lovell had invited them to

lunch with him, but he had the two ministers and Mr. Pennyman with him ; besides, many others who were unprovided flocked around his bountiful spread, which was free to all comers.

It was soon found that nearly all of the company intended to remain until after the afternoon service. Mr. Pennyman, although he lived at such a distance, had determined to remain, and it was apparent, from the remarks of several, that the main inducement to remain was not so much to hear the young stranger preach as to hear the singing.

Adair and his party had about finished their luncheon, when Colonel and Mrs. Lovell and the two ministers were seen approaching, and introductions, so far as required, soon took place.

Mr. Wright, after some conversation with Mr. and Miss Wilson, turned to Miss Howard and said : " I have already thanked my old friend, Mr. Pennyman, and now I must thank you, Miss Howard, for contributing so much to the pleasure of our services this morning. Such a voice as yours is a precious gift, for which you should be, and no doubt are, truly thankful."

" Thank you, Mr. Wright," was her modest reply.

Then, after a general conversation which lasted for several minutes, Mr. Wright arose and taking Mr. Adair by the arm, said : " Come, Mr. Adair, time presses, and as I wish a few words with you in private, I am sure our friends here will excuse us for a few minutes."

" Mr. Adair," said Mr. Wright when they had walked a few steps together, " I have just returned from a visit to my father, Elijah Wright ; from whom, and my sister, the widow Kent, I learned of your kind-

ness to the family in paying off that debt to Mr. Keep, for which I desire to return you my sincere thanks. But you may greatly need the amount, and, if so, I can easily arrange with James Wilson to let you have it. I need scarcely tell you that I, a Methodist preacher, am unable to pay the debt myself, or I would do so."

"No, sir," replied Adair, "let the debt stand just as it is. I am sure I have made a good and safe investment. Besides, a most happy result has already, apparently, grown out of that little transaction, which I feel at liberty to tell you of, since I am sure you will be pleased to hear it."

Adair then briefly told of his visit to Mr. Wilson's the day after he, Mr. Wright, had left; of his mission as regards Mr. Duncan and Miss Wilson; and of his conversation with the latter, and his subsequent interview with her father. "And," said Adair in conclusion, "Mr. Wilson did 'treat me right,' as you requested; and the whole matter was most happily arranged, and the marriage of Miss Wilson to Mr. Duncan, my friend and partner in business, will probably take place in a few weeks."

"Thank the Lord!" exclaimed Mr. Wright, heartily. "I am glad of it—glad of it! And now, my friend," he continued, "don't you see that the seed of charity you planted at my father's house has sprung up in a wonderful manner, and has already borne good fruit? And how much more it will bear eternity can only reveal. And this is the Lord's doing! Besides, you did not know, when you planted that seed,—but you soon found out,—that you had aided an old Revolutionary comrade and friend of your own father."

"Even so," replied Adair. "And not only were

our fathers comrades and friends, but your father once saved my father from being taken a prisoner by the enemy."

"Yes—yes," responded Mr. Wright. "My father once told me of that. And many a time, when I was a boy, have I heard him and my mother speak of Dashing Tom Adair—your father. And he—your father—is yet alive—will soon be at Salem on a visit to you, and you have promised to take him down on a visit to his old comrade, Elijah Wright! Ah, how I would like to be there and see the two old soldiers meet, and hear them talk! But," he added resignedly, "duty calls, and I must away."

When the two men, who had been strangers but an hour before, returned to the group, it was evident a bond of friendship had been executed which would never cease to bind them. During their absence, and while Colonel Lovell and Mr. Wilson, and Mrs. Lovell and Mr. Freeman, were engaged in conversation, Miss Wilson managed to say privately to Miss Howard that she thought she knew what Mr. Wright wished to speak with Mr. Adair about. "And," she added, "perhaps you do also?"

"No," answered Laura, "I have not the slightest idea."

Then followed the little story, by Miss Wilson, of Mr. Adair's kindness to Mr. Wright's father; how this, coming to her knowledge, had led her to think of getting Mr. Adair to speak to her father about Mr. Duncan, etc. "And," she added, "so he did not tell you that part of his story as you drove down this morning! Well, it only proves that he is as modest as he is good."

"Yes," responded Laura. "And see how it is! Good deeds do not sink in the stream of Time, but are kept afloat; hence we are told to 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.'"

Very soon Simon Wright, the able and indefatigable pioneer preacher, had bid his friends an affectionate farewell; and with "God bless you all!" as his parting words, mounted his horse and rode away; for he had, in addition to crossing the Ohio River, yet twenty miles or more to travel before he could reach the lonely cabin in Illinois where he expected to find food and shelter for the night.

Miss Howard and Miss Wilson then had an opportunity to talk over their affairs; and pour out, the one to the other, the full measure of sweet confessions. Miss Wilson had never looked so placid, so happy, so full of love and hope; but, withal, subdued by anxiety regarding her father. She had for some days seen so much of the loving father in his nature that her filial affection had been aroused; and, bad as he might at one time have been, she felt that he was amending, and she hoped to lead him, or see him led, back into a better "way"—into the "path" blazed by the Great Guide. And Miss Howard! she was more deeply, passionately in love, if possible, than ever before; for had not every development, as to the mind and heart of him she loved, raised him up to the high standard of her dreams, her hopes, her aspirations.

At three o'clock the Meeting-house was again well filled, and Mr. Pennyman was again in his glory, and Miss Howard's voice as sweet and musical as ever.

Mr. Freeman, when he arose to preach, was evidently somewhat embarrassed; for, be it remembered,

not only was he young, but he was a stranger. After a brief tribute of respect to the "Brother" who had preached for them in the morning, and referring to his —Mr. Wright's—zeal and abounding labors in the cause of the Master, he read his text and began his sermon in a slightly halting, hesitating manner. His theme was the "beauty of holiness," and the sermon was, in almost every respect, in striking contrast to that of Mr. Wright. Love was the burden of Mr. Freeman's "song." There was no power to startle, but his pleading, pathetic words went home to many hearts. And, when his embarrassment had subsided, when he had dropped or lost sight of his individuality, and become absorbed and carried away by his subject, he was really eloquent—but it was the eloquence of pathos, feeling, spirit. His was not a strictly logical mind—which could scarcely have been expected in one so young,—but it was deeply imaginative, and as he was carried away so were others carried with him, and soon there were many tearful eyes in the congregation. There was then no longer any wonder why the young preacher looked so frail; the wonder was how so frail a frame could give utterance to such a rush of arguments, appeals, and entreaties. And when he closed with tears in his eyes, and trembling from the joint effects of emotion and exertion, there seemed to go up from the congregation a sigh of relief that the exhausted man could rest.

Then, after a short prayer, came the parting hymn —that peculiarly pathetic old hymn beginning

"When shall we all meet again?"—

and then the benediction.

Slowly most of the congregation retired ; but some went forward near to the pulpit, where the pale young preacher stood, spoke a few words of kindly cheer, and, shaking his hand, said "Good-by" in sympathetic tones. He, the preacher, was to be the guest that night of Colonel Lovell ; and almost the last group at the Meeting-house was composed of Mr. Freeman, Colonel Lovell and his wife, Mr. Wilson and his daughter, Joseph Adair and Laura Howard. Many kind words were spoken ; invitations, yea, urgent requests, for visits to be made ; warm embraces among the ladies ; hearty good-bys all round, and then the separation.

Soon Adair and Miss Laura were slowly driving along the shady road on their return. At first but few words were spoken—the mind of each seemed to be preoccupied. Soon a reference was made to Miss Wilson having gone to the altar—or, rather, the "mourner's bench," as it was usually termed,—and Mr. Adair said that, when the preacher extended the invitation to "Come forward," Miss Wilson, who sat immediately in front of him, at once turned to her father, and asked if he had any objection to her going forward, and that the father's reply was : "No, my daughter, none whatever ; go if you wish to." Then followed remarks about the two preachers ; how strong and robust the one, and how delicate the other ; how forcible and commanding the one, and how pathetic and persuasive the other.

"And, Mr. Adair," said Miss Laura, "I have heard you refer to your associations, in boyhood, with the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Please tell me the story of those early associations, which appear to have made so deep an impression on your mind."

There was no resisting such an appeal, and Adair spoke of the death of his mother when he was an infant ; of his father having left Hillsboro for the West when he was too young to retain any remembrance of his features ; then of his and his brothers' happy home with the three old Quakers ; of the death of the three old men, and his separation from his brothers ; and of his journey West with the family of Mr. Morris.

"Then there came a day," he continued, "when we were journeying along the road which led beside the French Broad River ; the sun was nearly down, and I had gone in advance of the wagons to find a good camping ground, and soon came upon some "movers" in camp. As I approached, the gentleman and his wife, who were seated near the roadside, spoke pleasantly to me, and, in reply to their questions, I told them where I came from ; that the family with whom I was travelling was but a short distance behind ; and that I was looking around for a good camping ground. The gentleman pointed me out what he thought would be a very convenient camp, which was near his own. The lady then asked me two questions, which I distinctly remember : the first, was I 'an orphan'? the next, had I any 'brothers and sisters'? I told her what I have just told you of my father and mother ; that I never had a sister, but had two brothers who remained in Hillsboro. 'Poor boy!' she said, 'what a pity you, so young, should be separated from your brothers!' It was not so much the words as something in her tone and look which made me like the lady very much.

"Soon after we had halted at our camp," Adair went on, "the gentleman and his wife whom I had met walked over to see us. The gentleman carried a

child in his arms, but when he had introduced himself and his wife, and they were seated near Mr. and Mrs. Morris, the gentleman handed the child to his wife, who asked me if I would not like to know the name of her little girl. I told her I would, and that I would like to take charge of her little girl while she was in our camp. She told me the child's name, but she feared it would not go to a stranger; but it did, and smiled so sweetly, as I walked about with it in my arms, that I thought it very beautiful. The next day (we were yet, I remember, in North Carolina, my native State), I crossed a beautiful little stream which came tumbling down between two mountains and emptied into the French Broad River. Beneath its clear waters I saw many beautiful pebbles and gathered several of them; but there was one green pebble that was so much more beautiful and brilliant than all the rest that I threw all but it away. I know not why it was, but, as I looked upon my only pebble, I thought of the child that had smiled at me so sweetly the evening before. But, stranger still, as I slept that night with my pebble near me I dreamed the sweetest dream that I had ever dreamed. The child—that little girl—was by my side; she held the pebble in her hand and pressed it to her lips; and *I* could *not resist*, and took her in my arms again and kissed her as she smiled at me. And," he still hurried on, "on the third day, from that on which I had first seen the child, I *really* had her in my arms once more. I thought of my beautiful pebble, of my sweet dream, of the smile and the kiss, and *again* I could *not resist*—and—I *kissed her*."

Never had man a more attentive listener. Laura had looked, and listened, and trembled from a wildly

throbbing heart. She had interrupted his narrative by only a word and a look, but these were enough to make him go on and on until he had told one dream which he had never told before. But when he had spoken the last three words—"I kissed her,"—she too could no longer resist, the spell was upon, and around, and over her, and she *must* speak.

"And that little child was —who?" she asked with bated breath, as her soul-betraying eyes looked full in his.

"Was you, Laura!" And his black eyes said something as he hurriedly went on: "And is it any wonder, then, that through so many years, I should have retained in my heart the image of that child—the memory of *that kiss*, and another which was given me at parting? Or that through long years I should have travelled and hunted for that child? whom I knew, if alive, had grown to be a woman."

"But you have not told me,"—and she too spoke hurriedly, and her eyes of limpid blue said more than her words,—"did little Laura cry or frown, or did she smile at you again?"

"She smiled more sweetly than before," he answered, "but that was many years ago, and, if she knew—how—much—I loved her—still, I wonder what she now would say if I should—kiss her—once again!"

Male eyes of black looked into female eyes of blue. A question had been asked and yet there was no answering voice. But eyes flashed answering signal back to eyes, and glowing, happy faces told the tale. There was no need for words.

> "True love 's the gift which God has given
> To man alone beneath the heaven.

It is the secret sympathy,
The silver link, the silken tie,
Which heart to heart, and mind to mind,
In body and in soul can bind."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Adair, "Ben Simon is a most considerate horse, but at this rate night would come on ere we get home."

Then hand in hand they journeyed slow; and oh the jostling, crowding questions that were asked, and the quick glad answers that were given!

"And just to think!" at last she said, "you should have loved me when a child; and how, in after years, you hunted long to find my home. And oh how passing strange, that I, who could not remember to have ever gazed upon his face, should have dreamed, far back as I have memory of dreams, of one black-eyed boy, and should have loved—and loved but him. There surely is some charm—some talismanic power about this emerald stone you found and gave to me, and which I have worn through all these years."

"I know not how that may be," he smilingly replied, "but would you have me believe your dreams have now been realized? and, if so, will not your emerald lose its power to conjure up dreams—of pleasing things to come?"

"I hope and believe not," she answered. "But should it lose its magic power, I still would wear it, as I do to-day, in memory of what it hath already done. But," she added, "my dreams have not yet been *fully* realized. I still look forward—forward to many years of blessed companionship—and love with you,—to all the endearing and hallowing influences of an *earthly* home, and for the glad *fruition* in our heavenly home."

"You do not know," he rapturously said, "how glad I am to hear you speak such words of the endearing and hallowing influences of home!"

"But now," she said, and with a most appealing look, "come tell me why and how it is you have so long withheld from me the pleasing story which you just have told? You would not, I am sure, so have done had you but known how much I wished to hear—how uneasy, yea unhappy, I have been lest all my dreams should turn out mere illusions."

"The *how*," he said, "was only by one continuous struggle 'gainst my inclinations and desires. But, when I come to tell you *why*, I fear that I may strip myself of much, if not all, of the tinsel your far too partial eyes have made you think was gold. But listen, and you shall know the truth."

And the truth, the plain, unvarnished truth, he told her—told her all—of his love, hopes, intentions; then of the death of his brother, and of his doubts, fears, duties, obligations, poverty; and, in conclusion, said: "It was only last night my sister found out my secret, and notwithstanding her advice, of which I have told you, so late as this morning, I had not resolved to break my long silence. I had often noted your reserve when with me alone, and feared I occupied no warmer place in your heart than respect and esteem; and that you sought to prevent my making a declaration which would prove painful to us both. But now I see that what I mistook for precaution, was modest reservation. But now that I have broken silence I would not for worlds recall the words I 've spoken and be doomed to silence, nor for worlds exchange the words you 've said to me unless you 'd say them o'er again."

"Ah, now I see and understand it all," she said; and, looking up at him, her pure unselfish soul lighting up her azure eyes, went on: "And 't is just as I have *hoped* it was! It has shown me that the man I loved unselfishly recognizes the duties of a son and a brother, and discharges them. Now know ye this! You have not only told me that you loved me, but you have asked me to become your wife; and I, with all my heart, have answered, 'Yes, I will.' But think you not that I can now become impatient. I have now that other gem for which my heart has so long pined—your love! To be in doubt, or without hope, oh how it blasts and withers the buds, the flowers, and the fruits of life! But, now that I will doubt no more, I can calmly, hopefully, cheerfully wait—look on and love you all the more, because you are doing your duty, and pray God to help you. And when, in the fulness of time, you would come and ask this hand" (placing her right hand in his), "it shall be yours; and, in after years, it will cheerfully share with you labors that will not prove unguerdoned toil; for they will be lightened and made easy by a love that will cheer, support, and comfort us."

For once Adair could scarcely find words to make reply; but he gently pressed his loving Laura to his heart, pressed upon her lips a kiss as pure as dew-drops in the bosom of an opening lily, and at last he said—and said it reverently: "Thank God that I have found a heart so true and pure—a woman such as you to love me. To labor now will indeed be sweet, success will follow, and this hand shall soon be mine."

And in a calm, low tone she reverently replied: "'Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and

upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren' ; to whom has come, not his brethren but the widow and children of his lost brother, and to whom is yet to come an aged father with his youngest son."

"Amen!" responded Joseph Adair.

But they were now at the gate, and anxious Ada was there awaiting them. "How slowly you have been driving," she said. Then a quick glance into Laura's face and she guessed. She looked into another face, and she doubted not. And soon she knew enough to turn to Mr. Adair and say, with most bewitching frowns: "Oh, you naughty man! you have been telling tales; but I forgive you."

He stopped her with a kiss.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Duncan Visits his Kitty—Laura, Catherine, and Emily Meet—Adair and Duncan Visit them—How Ada Solved the Riddle—Duncan Visits his Brother—Adair Buys Mingo—Benton's *Crim.-Con.* Case—Benton's Letter from Miss Ritchie—Brantley's Return.

SOON after that memorable drive from the Big Spring Meeting-house, Adair informed, first, his sister, and then Duncan, of the happy event—his engagement to Miss Laura Howard. His sister received the information in an undemonstrative way, but her congratulations were none the less sincere. She repeated that she wished him, in shaping his course, to consult first his own and Miss Laura's happiness. And again her brother assured her that she and her children would continue to receive all the attention and assistance they required, and occupy the same warm place in his heart.

After telling Duncan of the principal events that occurred at the meeting, Adair went on to tell him of the "happy event." Duncan was demonstrative in his congratulations and declared that he, Adair, had won a prize of inestimable value, by a constancy that was unparalleled in the annals of real life or the realms of romance; and more, that he deserved what he had won.

"As for myself," continued Duncan, "I can but feel that, in a strange and most unexpected way, I have fallen heir to a great fortune which I do not deserve; and the question is constantly popping up in my mind, Can and will I use it well and wisely, or will it turn my head and make a fool of me? But," he added, "I find consolation in the thought that I will have Kitty to look after and take care of me!"

"That you distrust yourself," replied Adair, "is conclusive evidence, if any were wanting, not only of your modesty but of your fitness for the honor and trust that await you. And, Duncan, I give you full permission, when you see your Kitty to-morrow, to tell her of my good fortune. For, now that I look back, I can distinctly trace the inception of that trip of mine with Laura to her. She it was who wrote the note to Mrs. Lovell and suggested it; and, I more than suspect—and you may so tell her—that she was baiting a trap to have me caught. That she succeeded in her design, not only shows the fertility of her resources, but has entitled her to my lasting gratitude. For, but for that trap, I might, and probably would, have gone stumbling along in the dark without finding my treasure. And I must confess, too, Duncan, that your explanation of Laura's reserve, as I thought it, was correct, for her frankness, after I had told her of my love, was all that I could desire."

When—two days later—Duncan returned from his visit to Mr. Wilson's, he at once sought Adair to tell him the news.

"Ah," he said, "I was received and treated like a lord! I had a long talk with Mr. Wilson; and not only did he raise no objection to my union with his

daughter, but he was considerate and generous beyond my expectations. Furthermore, he spoke to me of his own position, surroundings, etc., with a frankness that both surprised and gratified me. In conclusion he asked, in fact urged, me to return from my visit to my brother as soon as I well could, and to come at once to see them. It struck me at the time, and subsequent reflection confirms me in the impression, that, without being positively alarmed, he feels some presentiment of evil, but what I know not. That sad-faced woman, Mrs. Wilson, for once appeared comparatively happy. The engagement of her daughter evidently relieves her mind of much anxiety. And Miss Catherine! I had heretofore met her, as you know, clandestinely—so to say. But she was now at home, and like a beautiful young queen just crowned; but, withal, more gentle, calm, thoughtful, and considerate than ever before. She is, I am sure, happy in the contemplation of her own future as my wife; but she, too, is apparently anxious about her father. She spoke of having, at the meeting, gone to the mourner's bench, and said she had done so, not only from a sense of duty—from an honest desire for light and guidance from above, but hoping that it would, in the providence of God, have a good influence on her father. For all of which I, in my heart, can but love and honor her all the more.

"When I told her," Duncan went on, "of your good fortune and delivered your message, and opinion about the 'trap,' she clapped her hands, and her eyes and face lit up with an animation and a gladness which showed how warm a place Miss Laura and you have in her regard. She admitted that, when she wrote the note to Mrs. Lovell, she did aim to bring you two

together ; believing, as she said, that a few hours of undisturbed conversation would result in a happy understanding. Moreover, she declared, as soon as I told her the news, that she *must* see Laura *again ;* and so she came with me to-day to the Squire's, and will remain for some days. Suppose you and I ride out to see the ladies one day this week, for I wish to leave, to make the visit to my brother, on Monday next."

"All right," said Adair. "I will let you know what day I can best go."

"And," Duncan resumed, "I must not forget Mr. Wilson's message to you. It was that he had seen Mr. Anderson, who was willing to let you have Mingo for eight hundred and fifty dollars, which he had been offered by another party, but would give you the refusal. Anderson, however, desires an early answer."

"Very well," said Adair. "I will write or see Mr. Wilson soon, and get him to see Anderson and close the trade."

The meeting between Laura Howard and Catherine Wilson was indeed a joyous one. They had much to say of their betrothment, of their past fears, present joy, and hopes for the future. If they were a little extravagant in the construction of airy castles, none but those of the cynical, sour-grape species would, we are sure, have found fault with them. 'T is said

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast,"

and what a God's mercy that it is so ! else who could encounter the mire, the pitfalls, and the sharp, jagged stones along life's pathway and remain a companionable creature. Few, too, of mankind, know the full measure of joy there is in a true woman's heart when

all the twining tendrils of her nature, of body, mind, and heart can clasp and cling without doubt or fear to the man—the strong trunk which assures her not only of support, but of a grateful shade. And when, as in this case, two virgin hearts, full of hope and confidence and love,—two who were not only themselves confiding, sympathetic friends, but whose plighted lovers were also warm friends and partners in business, had met together, what less surprising than that their communings should be too "secret, sweet, and precious" to be told in cold printed words; and must, therefore, be left to be imagined, as they well may be, by generous hearts who have loved.

A few evenings later, when Adair and Duncan rode out together to the Squire's, the meeting all round was a joyous one.

Adair soon learned from Laura that she had told her mother *all*, as he expected her to do. He, himself, soon sought a private interview with the good matron, who felt to him more like a mother than any one he had ever known. And he talked to her much as a son would have talked to a mother—told of his boyish attachment to Laura when a child; of his great love for her now; of his duties and obligations, his hopes and prospects.

Mrs. Howard listened, and with a kindly look replied: "Ah, Joseph, I need not tell you that both Mr. Howard and I liked you when we first knew you as a boy. When it came to parting with you, I felt almost as if one of my own sons was going from me. Since you have come among us, a man, I have been glad to find you just such a man as I had hoped and believed you would be. And I have long known of

Laura's love for you, and have hoped that you would learn to love her, for she is a good daughter, and will make you a good wife. But, Joseph, be in no hurry to come and take her from us, for, however glad we may all be to see her happily married, it will, nevertheless, be a sad day when we have to give Laura up—see her go from under our roof!"

"Laura told me," replied Joseph, "she was sure there would be no opposition by you or her father to our union; and I, myself, hoped there would be none; but I am none the less pleased with your kind words, for which I thank you with all my heart. Of course, when I come to ask the hand of Laura in marriage, I must ask the Squire's consent; but, in the meantime, is it necessary or advisable, think you, for me to speak to him as I have done to you?"

"It is not necessary," answered Mrs. Howard. "I will tell him what you have said to me. And, Joseph," she added smilingly, "I should tell you, you will never be able to obtain Mr. Howard's consent."

"How! how is that?" Joseph quickly asked, somewhat flustered by Mrs. Howard's words notwithstanding her smiles.

"Oh, don't be uneasy!" she laughingly answered. "It is only one of his peculiarities. He never gave his consent to the marriage of any of his daughters, but did not oppose them. I know he esteems you greatly, and would do anything he could to serve you. But he was ever reluctant to give up a daughter; and, the fewer we have left at home, the more reluctant he becomes. It will come especially hard on him to give up Laura; for *she* has been, I may almost say, his favorite, since he thinks her the most uniformly cheer-

ful, considerate, and unselfish member of our family. Moreover, he will, I am sure, think, now that I am growing old, that I, as well as my two younger daughters, will need Laura's assistance ; and so we will, but that must not stand in the way of her happiness. I should, however, add that, should one of his daughters make what he had reason to think was an unwise choice, I doubt if he would oppose her further than to tell *me* the grounds of his objections, and ask me to lay them before our daughter, and then leave the decision to her."

That afternoon Miss Wilmot was also a visitor at the Squire's ; and, as she had met Miss Wilson before, and knew Mr. Duncan very well, she was heartily welcomed by all, and added no little to the merriment of the company ; for hers was an outspoken rather than a timid and retiring nature, and she was rather fond of badinage. Her quick glances soon took in the salient points of the situation ; and as there was no disposition on the part of Adair or Laura to withhold their confidence and good news from her, she soon knew exactly how matters stood between them ; and, further, that Mr. Duncan and Miss Wilson were engaged. After heartily congratulating Mr. Adair and Laura—

"Ah," she said, "you don't know how much trouble you two have caused me. I have been surprised to see how blind you both have been—how you have gone blindfolded as it were. And I have so wanted to take each of you by the hand, lead you out into the light, unbind your eyes, and point out what I more than half-suspected you were both longing rather than looking for."

"And why did n't you do so?" Adair asked.

"Why!" she exclaimed. "Ah, you well know why. Did I not offer my assistance; yea, even urged you to let me help you, and thus in some measure repay the debt I owe you? You know I did!"

"I admit it," he replied. "But you know I did accept of your services in what I thought was a most important matter; and I must thank you for having discharged your mission in a most expeditious, secret, and efficient manner."

"None the less, my mission," she rejoined, "was, as it turned out, an unnecessary one; the apprehended danger being all imaginary."

"All of which," interposed Laura, "you two, perhaps, think is a riddle to me, but I am sure I can guess the answer."

"Let us hear your solution of the riddle," said Adair.

"You," she said, replying to him, "told Emily something about a certain person, and either asked or permitted her to come and tell me, so as to put me on my guard. Have I not solved it?"

"Your solution is correct," Emily answered. "But now, you must, in order to acquit me of any violation of confidence, explain how you arrived at your solution."

"That is easily done," Laura replied, "for here comes Ada, and to her, and not to me, the credit is due."

Ada, thus appealed to, and after being told the "riddle," put on one of her judicial looks and said: "Yes, I understand the case now. You see,"—addressing Mr. Adair—"there are some people who have so much brains, reason so profoundly, and look so far ahead, that they pay no attention to the tracks they are mak-

ing. And there are some other people''—and here she glanced at Miss Emily—'' who, when they have a secret, are so anxious to hide it that they try to cover it up too closely, and sometimes get caught at it. A real, live secret must have breathing space, and, if you cover it up too closely, you will, if you watch closely, see it move its covering. Besides, it 's only people who are in love that are blind, and, as I was n't in love, I, of course, soon discovered the secret, and told Laura ; but she, poor innocent, would n't at first believe it, because her heart was so full, she——''

'' Come, that 's enough ! '' exclaimed the blushing Laura, putting her hand over Ada's pouting lips.

'' Hands off ! '' cried Adair. '' I always did say the ' child ' had a wonderfully wise little head, but I never gave her credit for such acuteness. But she must explain her process of ratiocination.''

'' Hold up ! '' exclaimed Ada, '' while I make a note.'' And using the forefinger of her right hand as if it were a pencil, she rapidly formed invisible characters on the palm of her left hand.

'' And what is it you are making a note of ? '' Adair laughingly asked.

'' That last long word you used,'' Ada ruefully answered.

'' Well, then, let us know how you spelled it,'' he said.

'' Oh,'' she exclaimed, '' look and see for yourself ! '' extending her left hand.

Adair took the little hand in his, but instead of examining it, he kissed it.

'' Look out,'' cried Ada, '' or Laura will be getting jealous of me ! ''

"And should Laura get jealous of *you*, who is it that would get jealous of *me?*" he asked.

"Oh, the Dictionary man!" quickly answered the laughing girl.

"I give it up," said Adair as the laugh went round at his expense.

"But, Ada," said Miss Emily, "now for the process of——"

"Rat-eye-o-sigh-nation," interposed Ada. "If that 's not the right way to spell it, it pronounces about right, and it 's the way to keep from forgetting it."

"Tell me," said Adair, "how the 'tracks' or the 'covering' enabled you to discover the secret?"

"Well," replied Ada, again assuming a comically judicial look, "the tracks, I soon found, led around by Mr. Wilmot's and directly here, and when they got here, and Mr. Ruffled Bosom was seen here, the tracks from this on were like those of a 'skeered' rabbit." Here Ada was interrupted by the hearty laughter of Miss Emily, which somewhat deepened Laura's blushes. "And," resumed Ada, presently, "sister had been over to see you, Miss Emily, only two days before, and, of course, you did not know the bugaboo *then*, or you would have told her. And, when you came here, you spoke of how lonely you had been *since* sister left; and when Mr. Adair's name was mentioned, you did not speak of having seen *him* that morning; you were trying to cover *him* up; but the fact came out afterwards through a little breathing space. And sister——"

"Hold up!" exclaimed Miss Emily. "I am acquitted, and that 's the only case before you, Judge Ada; and, if you go on, I fear you will convict Laura."

"Oh, she would n't mind that!" said the teasing

Ada, "for she would have the Sheriff to take care of her!"

"You 'll be arrested some of these days," said Adair. "And should I then be Sheriff, won't you fare badly!"

"I 'm not afraid," Ada answered, "for sister would make you bail me out. And remember, too," she added as she bounded away singing, "'Every lass has got her laddie.'"

After Ada had gone, Adair showed Miss Emily two letters he had that morning received; one from the former schoolmaster of Mr. Brantley, which was very satisfactory, and one from Mr. Brantley himself, saying he hoped to be in Salem in a week or ten days; and that, as all had gone well with him, he hoped nothing would stand in the way of his marriage at an early day.

"Ah," said Miss Emily, after she had read the letters, "if he were only here now, I would feel as proud and happy as Laura and Catherine do!"

"I wish he was here," replied Adair; "but you won't have long to wait."

A few days later George Duncan bid good-by to Joseph Adair, and, mounting a good horse, set out on his journey to St. Louis to visit his brother.

The following day Adair rode out to the Squire's, and accompanied Miss Wilson on her return home. Their conversation on the road was varied and interesting to both; and Miss Wilson spoke with so much frankness, and showed so much intelligence, in an unassuming way, that Adair formed even a higher estimate of her mind and heart than he had before entertained. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson welcomed him most

cordially ; and the former assured him that he had been greatly pleased by his interview with Mr. Duncan, and was glad that matters had turned out as they had. Adair's business, in reference to Mingo, was soon arranged, and Mingo was permitted to go that evening to Salem to see his wife, and remain as the property of Mr. Adair.

Mingo, after parting with Mr. Wilson's slaves, made his appearance at the house, and, in his deferential but stoical manner, bid his "Mahs Jim" good-by. When he came to his "ole missus," his profound obeisance, and "Good-by, missus, good-by," was said so earnestly that it was evident he entertained for the sad-faced woman a profound respect, mingled, doubtless, with pity. He found his young "missus" in the yard. His parting with her would have tested his steady nerves and stoicism, but she wore a smiling face, and greeted him as he approached by saying :

"Ah, Mingo, you have come to say good-by ; and I should be very sorry to see you go, but you are going to be with Viney ; and, in Salem, I hope to see you much oftener than if you remained here."

"Yes, Miss Kitty," replied the faithful negro, "ef it wus n't fur that Ise would n't feel like goin', fur you has bin mi'ty good ter me. An' I 's mi'ty glad ter know you 's goin' soon ter git a good husban' like Mahs George; an' 'll be in Salem, whar' me an' Viney ken come an' see yer. An' I thinks Mahs Jo 'll be a mi'ty good mahster ; and yous may be shore I won't furget what yous tol' me wunst, ter be a faithful servunt ter him."

After a few words the parting was over, and at the last moment there were tears in the young "mis-

sus' " eyes, which Mingo observed, and, as he passed out of the gate, he turned, and, uncovering his head, bowed and waved her a touching adieu.

Instead of returning directly to Salem, Adair went by Colonel Lovell's and spent an hour or more there. After giving the news from Salem, the Squire's, and Mr. Wilson's, he had, of course, to tell the Colonel and his wife of his engagement to Laura, his happiness, etc. " I knew it—I knew it, and I 'm so glad ! " exclaimed Mrs. Lovell ; and for once the quiet little Colonel laughed aloud, and, taking Adair by the hand, said, " I 'm glad to know we will be brothers-in-law."

It was several days after Adair's return to town before he saw his friend Benton, who had been absent attending a session of the Court in an adjoining county. Benton had been very successful, and was in " high feather."

During the term of the Court there had been a case of *Crim.-Con.* in which Benton was engaged ; and his mode and method of conducting the cross-examination of a pert young dandyling, who was the principal witness in the case, were so unique and successful that, not only the spectators, but the grave jurymen and the solemn judge, could scarce repress their laughter. After the case was decided—" Blast my hide ! " said one old farmer who was present, " ef that young Benton did n't make that chap swar' t' other way about 'fore he know'd it, an jist win his case easier 'an fallin' off er log. Benton 's jist slicker 'an greased lightnin' ; an' it 's better 'an a circus ter hear him talk." And that same evening, or rather night, quite a crowd collected in the bar-room of the tavern where Benton stopped, and he " let himself loose," spinning yarns, mimicking

grave and well-known personages, etc. In fact, the entertainment—for such it might fitly be called—was so diversified, so irresistibly comic or startlingly dramatic, that it was only when Benton declared that he must go to bed and rest that the crowd dispersed. One jolly old fellow present was heard to say: "Young Benton could jist clim' inter the Legislater, er inter Congress whenever he wanted ter"; and such seemed to be the impression of the crowd. The next day Benton's fame spread over the town; and, before the session of the Court was over, he pocketed several fees, large enough to make him feel that he was on the high road to fortune.

Benton was, consequently, when Adair called, "in capital trim," so he said, "excepting for one thing," which kept "grinding in his gizzard." That "thing" was a letter he had received from Miss Ritchie, in reply to one he had written her of the events which had transpired soon after she left home. Her reply, Benton confessed, was not such as he had expected; and, after informing Adair of its purport—for he had not the letter with him,—he went on to characterize it as "unsympathetic and evasive," and he added:

"She winds up her letter by saying she will be in no hurry to return home; that she has no doubt many persons are saying hard things about her; that she will let them have their talk out; and that she finds society, where she is, altogether more polished and agreeable than around Salem. And now, Adair, what think you of it all? And, remember, her letter is in reply to one in which I assured her of my continued and unabated love, confidence, and sympathy; whereas she sends me no such assurances, but, on the con-

trary, finds society more *agreeable* where she is than here."

Adair was now convinced that Miss Ritchie was a heartless flirt, and thought the sooner his friend's eyes were opened to the fact the better.

"Benton," he said, "I am sorry to hear all this, but it is only what I have feared. Before replying directly to your question, I feel it to be my duty to tell you what I have heard, in reference to Miss Ritchie, since I last saw you." He then related substantially what Holman had told him of his two interviews with Walter Gowan, and in conclusion said: "And now, Benton, to be frank with you, I must say, considering Holman's statements, which I am sure were honestly and correctly made so far as he was concerned, and the letter you have from Miss Ritchie, I can but come to the conclusion that she is unworthy to be your wife."

Benton at first listened stoically, but before Adair ended, the truth—the painful truth—seemed slowly to dawn and then to flash upon him, and he flushed and paled by turns. He walked the floor for some moments before he turned and said:

"Adair, it was but right I should know it, and I thank you for telling me Holman's tale. I know Holman to be a truthful man, and I do not doubt one word he says. Nor do I see how he or you could put any other construction on the facts than you have done. That Miss Ritchie has misled me, if not deceived me, on some points appears certain; and, if in a little matter, possibly, probably in more important matters. In a few words, she whom I have loved, and loved ardently, may have trifled with and deceived me, as the *dead man* expected her to do; and, if so, she *is* unwor-

thy to be my wife. But," he added with emphasis, "I will act frankly and loyally with her; will write and tell her of what I have heard from a trustworthy source, but will mention no names—and ask her for an explanation. If she makes one, and it is reasonable and satisfactory, all shall be right with me. If, however, she refuses to make any explanation, or makes a lame and impotent one, I will ask her to release me from my engagement. The disruption, if it must come, must be owing to her fault, not mine."

"I am glad, Benton, to hear you say this. You take, I think, the right view of the matter," replied Adair.

A few moments later the two friends parted. Adair had intended telling Benton of his own good fortune, but he felt that it was not a fitting moment for him to do so; that his own happiness would, by contrast, make Benton's position appear the more painful.

About a week later, Adair, on returning to town one evening, learned that Mr. Brantley had arrived and desired to see him. The two soon met. After an exchange of greetings, Miss Wilmot was, of course, first spoken of. Adair told of his first interview with her; that she had hesitated about his sending the letters of inquiry as to his, Brantley's, character, about which she had no misgivings; that she had, however, permitted them to be sent at his, Adair's, solicitation; and that the answers received had confirmed all he, Brantley, had said of himself, etc.

"And now, Brantley," Adair resumed, "I must congratulate you on your good fortune. Before you left, I had but a slight acquaintance with Miss Emily, but, now that I know her well, I have a very warm

regard and great respect for her. And, coming as you did among us, you certainly are a fortunate man to have won the heart of such a young lady."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Brantley; and, rubbing his soft, well preserved hands together, said: "That was the most brilliant trick ever performed by a showman! And, to tell you the truth, I can only account for my success in one way: I was downright in earnest, and determined to succeed. And I 'm delighted," he went on in his animated way, "to know you think so highly of Miss Emily. By-the-way, I have sent her word that I would be out to see her to-morrow; and I 'm going to try and fix up matters in quick order. I 'll tell you all about it when I return."

Then followed an explanation by Adair of the recovery of the two gold coins; which, on being shown to Brantley, he declared were the identical ones stolen from him.

"And now," Adair asked, "what steps do you think of taking in this matter? Do you intend to prefer charges against Rudolph, and have him arrested and tried?"

"No, sir," Brantley promptly answered. "He has many relatives and friends around here whom I esteem; and, for their sakes, I would not like to see him sent to the penitentiary. But I don't intend to let him go unpunished. I think I see my way to get my money back, and punish him enough. In my efforts to do this I will violate no law, nor do anything to hurt my own standing with the good people of this town. I should have no objections to telling you of my plans, so far as formed, but I think it best not to do so, for it might embarrass and place you in an unpleasant posi-

tion, should they miscarry. This much, however, I must say: From what you and others have told me it is evident Rudolph has been very uneasy, fearing that I would return, and, in some way, bring his crime to light. I must, for the present, relieve his mind of any anxiety on this point. I have already met him; the meeting was unexpected to him, and he was evidently much disconcerted, but I advanced and met him so cordially that he seemed greatly relieved, and soon became quite hearty—for him,—and expressed much pleasure at seeing me back; hoped I intended to remain; said the town had been dull without me, etc."

"I am glad to know," said Adair, "that you do not intend to prosecute him, for it would be a severe blow to his worthy relatives. He should, however, know that his offense has been discovered; for it would possibly deter him from other offenses. As to your plans, it is doubtless best that I should not know of them."

"And that note of mine which you hold," said Brantley, "I must n't forget that! Here 's the money, and a thousand thanks besides! And that horse of yours, Ben Simon, you have him yet, have you? Ah, glad to hear it; he 's a good one! And I 've got a good one too—a sorrel mare—and, *confidentially*, she is a trump card; she—just—can't—be beat—one mile."

Two days later the elated Mr. Brantley sought Mr. Adair and informed him, with much rubbing and patting of his soft, white hands, that all was arranged; that his marriage would take place soon, but the exact day was not fixed; that he desired him, Adair, and

Benton to be the groomsmen ; that Miss Laura Howard would be one of the bridesmaids, but that the other was not yet certain.

Adair at once, and Benton a little later in the day, cheerfully consented to perform the pleasing duty, etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Old Tom Adair and his Son Dan—Dan and Carrie Gilroy—The Old Man and his Daughter—Tom Adair and Elijah Wright—Ben Simon, the Patriotic Jew Peddler—Old Tom and Elijah Meet—James Wilson Killed—Duncan's Return—A Quiet Wedding—A Celebrated Horse Race—Brantley Settles with Rudolph—Rudolph Leaves Salem—Brantley's Grand Wedding—Churched for Dancing.

A FEW evenings later, the soft sound of a bugle came from the top of the first hill to the west of Salem; and "There comes the stage!" was in the minds or on the lips of every one. This coming of the stage was no unimportant event in such a quiet little inland town, for not only did it bring the mail, but there were usually a number of idlers, old and young, who gathered about the door of the Brick Hotel to get a peep at the passengers. By the time the stage swung around in sight from behind the Court House, and the last note of the "stage-horn"—for so the long tin bugle blown by the driver was called—had died away, the usual crowd had gathered, and among them was Joseph Adair, who was expecting the arrival of some friends. When the panting horses, which for the last half mile had been driven at a rapid pace, were reined up, not only was the coach found to be full inside—

nine passengers,—but there was a well-grown boy seated beside the driver.

The coach had scarcely stopped before the slim, erect, black-haired, black-eyed boy, Daniel Adair, was down and shaking hands with his brother Joseph. And soon a feeble old man, with an abundant suit of white hair, worn in a cue, but whose black eyes seemed undimmed by age, descended from the coach. And that old man was the dashing Tom Adair of old ; and, as he leaned upon the arm of his son Joseph, the crowd around made way for them.

The old man and his two sons were soon seated in the private room of the good Mrs. Gilroy, that the old man might rest awhile before walking on to the home of his son. And the portly Judge, his plump, bright, autumnal wife, and their two fair-haired, beautiful daughters, were introduced to the old man and his youngest son, to whom they each spoke kindly words of welcome. And soon a servant entered, bearing a small tray on which was a tumbler containing a decoction the essential ingredient of which was Jamaica rum ; and the old man tasted the decoction and said it was "just right," and the best he had tasted for many a day ; and it helped him—"braced him up," so he said, so that he talked well and cheerfully ; said that his journey had not fatigued him so much as he expected ; that he was glad to see again his "Joseph son"—for thus he generally called his son Joseph,—and that he was delighted to meet with and know such a kind family.

"And, Dan, my son," the old man added, "if they rear such pretty young ladies around here as these daughters of the Judge, you will soon like Salem."

Dan smiled and nodded assentingly without appearing in the least embarrassed or confused.

"And, Mrs. Gilroy," said Joseph Adair, addressing that lady, "where is my pet, Miss Carrie? I must see and introduce my father and Dan to her."

Carrie was called and came bounding into the room, not knowing strangers were there, and suddenly stopped; but presently she came forward, in a timid, blushing sort of way and shook hands with the old man, and gave him the kiss for which he asked.

And Carrie, the little maiden of eleven, with chestnut locks, eyes of blue, and complexion of almost alabaster whiteness, held out her little hand to Dan, the black-haired, black-eyed boy of fifteen, who rose from his seat and taking the little hand in his said "Howdy." But soon the boy went on composedly talking to the little maiden about his ride on the stage coach; how they rattled down the hills, and what a good driver Mr. Nash was. And Carrie wanted to know what he thought of "Old Ned," the big black horse "that was—yes, behind, on that side, you know,"—waving her left hand. And Dan thought old Ned was the best of the lot; that he pulled the most, and did all of the holding back when going down hill. And by the time the old man was thoroughly rested, and had finished that decoction of Jamaica rum, Dan and Carrie had made a good start to become fast friends.

Joseph had sent word to his sister that the father and brother, whom she had never seen, had arrived, and would soon be up; consequently she was prepared and at the door to welcome them.

The old man took the daughter in his arms, embraced and kissed her; and then, holding her hands in

his, and looking fondly at her, said, "My daughter, you look too pale."

And Dan was kissed and praised by his sister as a "tall and handsome boy." "And, oh," she added, "you, too, have such black eyes; you all have; and so had——" "William" was on her lips, but she did not speak the name, because of a little choking sensation.

The "chicks," as Joseph called them! The old man had other grandchildren—those of his son Thomas in Hillsboro,—but these were the only ones he had ever seen; and he was very proud of them, fondled and played with them, and told them "funny" stories.

One bright morning, a few days after his father's arrival, Joseph said to him: "Father, there is an old man living some nine miles from here who says he once knew you well; that he was a soldier with you under General Marion; and, as he is too feeble to come here, I have promised him to drive you down to see him."

As Joseph spoke, the father kept his keen eyes fixed upon him; and presently the old man rose quickly and said: "'Joseph son, stop! let me think a moment." Then straightening himself up, and slowly raising his right arm, the hand open and the palm to the front, he, after a short pause, said in a full, clear voice: "In the name of heaven! is Elijah Wright alive?"

"Yes, father; that is the old man's name," Joseph answered.

"And Polly, his wife?" said the old man, his hand still elevated. "But, ah, I see! Polly has gone in advance." He had read it, perhaps, in his son's face; and slowly the uplifted hand descended, and, for a

moment, the white head was bowed; but, raising it quickly, he asked, "And whom has Elijah left?"

"He has with him a widowed daughter and her son, a boy of fifteen; but the old man has one son—a great preacher," Joseph answered.

"What!" exclaimed the old man, "is Simon Wright, of whom I have often heard, a son of Elijah's? Ah, I see—I see he is! Well done! The seed of such men should not be lost to the world."

"But, father," said Joseph, "did you know that Elijah Wright lived in this county, and thus guessed to whom I referred?"

"I did not," was the distinct answer. "Nor did I know that he now, or ever had, lived in this State. I have not seen or heard from him since I parted from him and Polly, beyond the mountains, at the close of the Revolution. But, Joseph son, when you first spoke of an old man who once knew me, there came to me the memory of the last time I saw Elijah and Polly; they stood at the door of their little cabin in the forest, and watched me as I mounted my old war-horse, Ben Simon, and rode away. And well do I remember Polly's parting words to me—'The Lord thy God be with thee in all thy ways.' And, Joseph son, it will greatly warm my old heart to see once more the face, and hear once more the voice, of Elijah; for not only was he my comrade and friend, but he once saved me from being taken a prisoner by the enemy, and perhaps thereby saved my life. And of Elijah it might have been said, as truly as of any man I ever knew—'He feared God, but knew no other fear.' And, Joseph son, I hope to see him soon."

"Father, we will go to-day if you wish it—we could

not have one more pleasant. I will drive ; and another horse named Ben Simon shall pull us."

"What ! another horse named Ben Simon ! How is that ?"

"When I visited you some years ago, I heard you refer to your old war-horse, Ben Simon ; and I afterwards bought a horse that I thought worthy of the name, and gave it to him."

An hour later, Ben Simon was in the same buggy that had been driven to and from the Big Spring Meeting-house, and the noble animal never looked sleeker, for Mingo now had charge of him. And in the buggy were some sugar, coffee, and tea, presents for the widow Kent ; some powder and lead, presents for the boy Elijah Kane Kent ; and a bottle of old Jamaica rum, and one of peach brandy, presents—well, these were for the two old soldiers.

And as they rolled gently along the road, the old man said that Ben Simon number two was much like his old war-horse in color—a dark bay, with black mane and tail. When asked how his war-horse came by such a peculiar name, the old man told the following little story :

"I was a soldier under General Lincoln in Charleston during the siege—that was in 1780. After the surrender of the city, I with many more prisoners was thrown into prison. The small-pox broke out in the prison in which I was confined, and I was soon down with that terrible disease. I was then, with others affected, removed from the prison to a pest-house beyond the enemy's lines. When I recovered sufficiently to travel, I had little difficulty in escaping from the enemy, but to do this I had to swim the

Cooper River, the water of which was then at a pleasant temperature, but in my weak condition the exertion was almost too much for me. However, I managed to get to the opposite shore, and afterwards to drag myself a short distance along an unused road which ran from the river. Just as I had lain down to rest, I saw a man approaching me. I feared he was some one from the enemy's camp, but I was too exhausted to attempt to escape. The man proved to be a Jew peddler—at least he passed for such. To me he was a good Samaritan ; he gave me a slice of bread, a little dried meat, and a sip of wine ; and, after learning who and what I was, he directed me to a small plantation house some miles distant, where I could find food and shelter for the night ; and further informed me where General Marion and his ' ragged squad ' were a few days before. When he was about leaving me, I begged to know his name, and said I hoped the time would come when I could repay his kindness to me ; but he only shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and said good-humoredly in broken English that I might call him Ben Simon.

" Months afterwards " continued the old man, " when I was serving under General Marion, that same Jew was brought a prisoner into our camp. I at once recognized him, and, walking aside with the General, informed him of what the Jew had once done for me. The General merely asked me if the prisoner had seen and recognized me, and on my answering ' No,' he told me to keep out of sight for a few minutes. He then approached those who had arrested the Jew, and made some inquiries as to the cause and manner of the arrest. He then turned to the Jew and asked him if he had any remarks to make or explanations to give. The Jew

only shrugged his shoulders, arched his eyebrows, and said, in substance, that what his captors had said was true, and that he had no explanation to make, excepting that he was not an enemy of ours. The General at once ordered him to be released, and his pack returned to him. The Jew seemed surprised at having gotten off so easily, but when I approached him to shake hands, he knew me, and at once exclaimed, 'Ah, me see ! it vos you.' That same Jew was often afterwards in our camp, and the boys used to laugh and assert that, although a genuine Jew, he must be some kin to General Marion ; and really the two men did look much alike—in fact, the resemblance was very striking ; and they certainly were good friends, for the Jew never came into our camp that he had not long private talks with the General, and it was supposed furnished him with much valuable information.

"One day," the old man went on with increasing animation, "that same Jew dashed into our camp, riding a fine horse. He spoke a few hurried words to the General, and the next moment a hundred men were in their saddles, and, under the immediate command of the General, by whose side the Jew rode, were in full gallop. We took a detachment of Tarleton's troopers by surprise. They fired one volley and fled, but that one volley did some sad work,—my horse fell dead, and, as I rose from the ground, I saw the Jew reel in his saddle. I sprang to his side, caught him in my arms as he fell, and as I laid him down he said : 'Tak' mine hoss ; foller dem ; me die 'asy.' And the next moment he was dead. I mounted his horse, and was soon up with the foremost in the chase. It was a glorious day for us. We captured several of the enemy,

and a supply of arms and munitions which we greatly needed ; but we all mourned the loss of that Jew. We buried him with military honors. Just before we laid him in his grave, I discovered and took from around his neck a small gold chain to which was suspended, and worn next the heart, a locket containing an exquisite ivory miniature of a beautiful young woman and a child, which I handed to General Marion, who said, ' I will try and find to whom this should be sent.' He, the General, was the last to leave the grave. The Jew's horse fell to me, and I rode him during the remainder of the war ; and, when the war was over, and I visited for the last time my old friends, Elijah and Polly Wright, I rode Ben Simon, for I called the horse by the only name I ever knew for the humane and brave Jew peddler."

There is a joy which, in its outward manifestations, has much the appearance of grief. Thus it was when the two old men, Thomas Adair and Elijah Wright, met. They grasped hands, trembled, looked a moment in each other's face, muttered some incoherent words, and their heads rested for some moments on each other's shoulder. There were no distinct expressions of joy at meeting after so long a separation. It was a sort of stupefied amazement that they had met—that the one was the Tom and the other the Elijah who had fought side by side in the Revolution. And then what had they of good and cheering news to tell the one to the other? Theirs was but a disconnected, broken account of life's varied battles ; how this one had fallen here, and that one there ; how bright mornings had come and hope been buoyant, but how the heavens were soon overcast and dark nights followed. But,

was joy a myth and life a failure? No, no! The struggle had been a long and varied one; there had been alternations of sunshine and storm, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, smiles and tears; but now! the end was very near, the battle would soon be over, the victory won; tiresome labors would give place to a rest that was not inaction; enfeebled age would soon put on an ever-abounding youth; and they would rejoin their loved companions and comrades, who had exchanged their tents on the battle-fields of earth for an ever-abiding home in the "Land of Peace."

And old Elijah greatly desired that his old friend Tom should sleep beneath his roof that night; and so, after dinner, Joseph Adair told his father that he would return home, but would come back for him the next day. That night the two old men sat up until a late hour, talked of other days, long gone by, of comrades gone before, and fought their battles o'er again. And the widow and her son sat by and listened. And the next morning the two old men, aided by the widow and her son, slowly and painfully climbed the mountain side until they stood by the undressed stones which marked the grave of Polly Wright. And the two old men, with dry eyes, knelt reverently beside the grave; and the widow and her son, with streaming eyes, knelt near by, and a few minutes were spent in silent prayer. And soon the four came slowly down the mountain side; and in the afternoon Joseph and his father returned home, and, as they drove along, the old man seemed to have a heavy heart and spoke but little—for memory was busy.

Another week or two passed by, and a report reached Salem that James Wilson had been shot and killed;

that some one had, in broad, open day, approached near the house, and shot him as he sat in the porch in his great arm-chair, and that death had been instantaneous. Joseph Adair at once mounted Ben Simon and rode rapidly to the scene, found that the report was true, and that a number of persons had collected, —among them Colonel Lovell and his wife. The widow and daughter had been nearly wild with grief, but were now more composed and resting quietly. The Colonel gave his quiet orders and superintended everything. And when, two days later, the body of James Wilson was laid beside that of his son Penn, Colonel Lovell, standing by the open grave, offered up a short and simple prayer, but one that went home to many hearts. And when the grave was filled, all slowly dispersed ; and the bereaved, sad-faced widow, and her sorrowing daughter left their gloomy home, and went to that of their kind friends, Colonel and Mrs. Lovell, where they remained for some time. Who the assassin was, was never positively ascertained. A " dreaded man " had been killed ; the law-abiding public breathed more freely ; and little or no effort was ever made to find out who was the perpetrator of the bloody deed.

When George Duncan returned home and heard the sad news of Mr. Wilson's death, he was further told, by Joseph Adair, that Mr. Wilson had left a will, of very recent date, in which he, Duncan, was, in the event of his marriage to Catherine Wilson, appointed executor, without security, of his, Wilson's estate. And Duncan went at once to Colonel Lovell's to see the widow and her daughter. The meeting was one of mingled joy and sorrow. The good Colonel said

that matters pertaining to the estate required attention, and that, considering all the circumstances, he thought the marriage should take place as soon as Miss Wilson's convenience would permit. And so it was arranged ; and when the day came the ceremony was performed at the residence of Colonel Lovell. And when George Duncan and Catherine Wilson stood before the officiating magistrate, Christopher Howard, to be made husband and wife, Joseph Adair and Laura Howard, not as groomsman and bridesmaid, but as their nearest and dearest friends, stood by their side. And all was well ! Two loving hearts were united, and the widow and her daughter had a good protector. James Wilson's estate proved to be even more valuable than was generally supposed, and was well and prudently managed.

A few days later, the usually quiet little town of Salem was in a state of unwonted excitement. A great horse race was to take place that day ; many had ridden from ten to twenty miles or more to witness it ; Brantley's sorrel mare was to run against the king of the Livingston County turf—Black Cub. Betting ran high, there was much drinking and some drunkenness, and consequently some rough-and-tumble fighting. The backers of Black Cub were not only sanguine, but had —so a few of them said—" a shore thing of it " ; and no one was more sanguine than Henry Rudolph. The " world " said he had made only a few, small " gentlemanly bets," but there were those who knew that he had betted largely. The excitement increased as the hour for the race drew near. The fences near the stand were lined, and trees here and there in the field were filled with boys. Men who had no money bet

property ; there were bets of horses, mules, oxen, cows, and calves, and even some payable in tobacco, corn, etc.

Before the race, Brantley approached Adair and said quietly : " I don't want you to lose your money, and I beg you not to bet against the sorrel mare." Adair, in reply, told him he had not bet a dollar, and probably would not.

When the horses were being stripped for the start, the negroes, of whom there were many on the course, were even more excited than the whites ; Mingo was among them, and, stoical as he usually was, he rattled his money at first one and then another of his colored acquaintances.

" What, Mingo ! " said his master, when he chanced to meet him, " are you betting on the race ? "

" Yes, Mahs Jo," was the answer, " I 's jist backin' out some o' dese noisy niggers."

" And which horse are you betting on ? " the master asked.

" On the sorrel mar', sir," was the decided answer.

Soon the riders were up, and Henry Rudolph, passing near Joseph Adair, said : " Twenty-five dollars, Adair, on Black Cub ! "

" No," said Adair, " I am not betting on the race ; but if you are anxious, I 'll find one in a minute whom I will guarantee to take your bet."

" Please do so," said Rudolph, with cynical courtesy.

Adair stepped back and, after speaking a few words in an undertone to Mingo, advanced to where Rudolph stood and said, " Done, Mr. Rudolph ! Twenty-five dollars cash."

And now all was ready ; and at the tap of the drum

away the horses flew around the course—one measured mile. The pace was tremendous from the very jump. On the back stretch, at the half-mile post, the two were running abreast, Black Cub having the inside track ; thence they had to descend a gentle incline, and the more powerful horse could stand best the long strides and consequent great strain on the fore legs, and gained a full length on the mare ; next they shot across a narrow, level valley and the mare held her own ; but when they reached the hill the mare made a mighty rush, locked, then passed, and came on in magnificent style, winning by two lengths in one forty-one and a half—some said it was even one forty-one. For half an hour or more all was confusion and turmoil, whooping, hallooing, yelling, laughing, crying, rejoicing, cursing ; men, ordinarily cool, were almost wild over their losses or their gains.

On the race course, Henry Rudolph handed Mr. Adair the twenty-five dollars he had lost on the race, which the latter handed over to Mingo, whose total winnings that day amounted to forty-three dollars.

After a few days, it "leaked out" that on a certain moonlight night the Black Cub party secretly took the sorrel mare from her stable and ran her against the horse, and he beat her. But there was another side to the story, which was talked about and laughed over for many a day. Brantley, who had received some inkling of the plot, prepared for it, and had his mare shod all round with extra heavy shoes ; and old "Sip" (Cipio), his negro trainer, witnessed the race by moonlight and was surprised and elated at the mare's performance.

On the day following the race Mr. Brantley requested Mr. Rudolph to come to his room that they might

quietly arrange their bets on the race. Rudolph went. The amount was soon figured up, and it was so large that Rudolph declared that he could not pay cash, and that Mr. Brantley must take the larger portion in "cash notes." Then it was Brantley arose, went to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. Rudolph observed the movement, turned pale, and haltingly asked for an explanation. Brantley coolly looked him in the face and told him—told him about the robbery ; that he had seen him ; that he had been watched ; that he, Rudolph, had paid some of the identical money stolen—notably some rare and marked gold coins,—to Warren Davidson, who, within an hour of receiving the same, had paid the gold coins to Mr. Adair.

"And now," said Brantley in conclusion, "add four hundred and sixty-two dollars, the amount you stole from me, to the amount due me as per that memorandum, and settle up at once—before you leave this room. If you have n't got the cash or good cash notes here with you, then give me your note due one day after date ; and, if that note is paid within forty-eight hours, I will, for the sake of your relatives and friends, spare you ; otherwise, I will land you in the penitentiary certain ! Furthermore, you must, within sixty days, *leave this county and State.*"

And Henry Rudolph, coward as he was, sat pale and trembling ; great drops of cold sweat stood upon his forehead ; he begged and pleaded for mercy, and finally paid the entire amount by handing Brantley the note of Warren Davidson for eighteen hundred dollars, bearing interest at the rate of twelve per cent. per annum, some other cash notes, and a small amount in

money. Furthermore, he agreed to leave the county and State within the sixty days, and begged that Mr. Brantley would never let the matters between them become known. And within the sixty days Rudolph sold his farm, and with his negroes left Salem to make his home "down South," in, as he said, a "more genial climate"; and but few persons ever did know why the "model young gentleman" and man of "resources" left Salem.

A few weeks after the race there was a grand wedding, and, this time, Squire Howard united in holy matrimony Jefferson Brantley and Emily Wilmot, the ceremony taking place at the residence of the bride's father. Joseph Adair and Horace Benton were the groomsmen, and Laura Howard and Ada Howard the bridesmaids. A young lady from Princeton was to have been one of the bridesmaids, but illness prevented her attendance, and Ada Howard took her place. The residence of Mr. Wilmot was too small to admit of dancing, but the company present had a merry time—the fun and frolic being kept up until a late hour. It was then the custom to "give" (hold) the infare at the residence of the groom's parents or some other near relative, but, as Mr. Brantley had no relatives in the county, his infare was held at the Brick Hotel in Salem, and great were the preparations made on the occasion—never had such an elegant and sumptuous table been spread in those "parts"; there were meats of many sorts, including barbacued pigs, and cakes, pastries, fruits, nuts, and wines and liquors in abundance. Silas Holman and Billy Wilmot were never in better trim, and their fiddles seemed the fountain of such ecstatic sounds as to set the nerves of old as well

as young tingling with a pleasurable excitement which could only find its true expression in the quick and graceful movements of the dance. And dancing there was, and such dancing ! There was Bird McCoy, who could "cut the double shuffle,"—spring into the air, strike his feet together thrice before lighting, and not lose step to the music. And among the young ladies—many of them country girls whose lives in the open air made them as active as squirrels and as graceful as fawns—were many good dancers, but it was conceded that among them all the slight, sylph-like Ada Howard was the best—"the pick of the flock." And the mirth and fun grew "fast and furious," and the "dancers quick and quicker flew." Nor did the fun and frolic cease until faint streaks of light in the East heralded the coming morn. They almost literally

> "Danced all night 'til broad daylight,
> And went home with the girls in the morning."

And yet, be it said that, while there was a good deal of drinking that night, there was no drunkenness, rowdyism, unseemly behavior, or ungentlemanly conversation ; for woe to the young man who at such a time and place, when ladies were present, had violated the recognized rules of decorum !

It is certain, however, that several young persons came very near that night being "fiddled out of the church." There was one gay, good-humored, hearty country girl who, when "churched" for dancing that night, admitted that she was "on the floor with the so-called dancers" ; that she had a "partner," and took part in the movements ; but, she contended, that inasmuch as she had not *crossed her feet*, she had vio-

lated no rule of the church. "What," she asked, "if I walk forward and backward and turn and bow *without* music, is that dancing? And if I do the same when there *is* music, does that make it dancing?" And the good old brethren, who were sitting in judgment, after mature deliberation, came to the conclusion that they were not "cl'ar on the p'int 'bout crossin' the feet." "And," said one, "if we err, let it be on the side o' marcy." "Yes," replied another, "but let the young sister onderstand that she must n't do it ag'in." And so the matter was settled.

CHAPTER XXX.

Adair Asks Squire Howard for the Hand of his Daughter—The Marriage of Joseph and Laura—Dan Adair and his Strawberry Cousins—The Firm of Joseph and Daniel Adair—Mingo Loans them Money—Dan Loses his First Wife—Dan and Carrie Gilroy, his Second Wife—Closing Remarks about Characters Portrayed—Ben Simon, the Horse: a Strange but True Story—Livingston County Divided—Old Salem Left Desolate.

WHEN the autumn had passed and the winter came on, the old man, Tom Adair, suffered a good deal from an asthmatic affection. Then came March with its cold, blustering winds, and with it came word that Elijah Wright was very low—could not live many hours; and Joseph Adair at once took his father down to see him; and when the soul of Elijah Wright peacefully went up to meet his Polly and his God, old Tom Adair was holding the hand of his old comrade. And Joseph spoke such words of comfort as he could to the widowed daughter and her son. And when the day for the burial came, the Rev. Mr. Freeman was present, and all was done in solemnity and order. Many friends attended the funeral, and among them old Tom Adair and his son Joseph; and they saw all that was mortal of the good and brave old pioneer laid

to rest beside his Polly on Bizzell's Mount. Again they were united; and some rude stones like those which marked her grave marked also his.

And when, a few weeks later, old Tom Adair came to leave Salem, to return to his home, many regretted to see him go, for he was a jovial, kind old man, could tell many good stories, and had a pleasant word for every one—old and young, bond and free. His son Dan, who after a short stay in Salem had been sent to Cumberland College, Princeton, came to see his father off. Joseph accompanied his father home, and renewed his acquaintance with, and his affection for, his half-brothers and sister, whom he hardly knew.

The spring had come and gone, summer had just begun, and the wheat was almost ready for the scythe, when one day Joseph Adair mounted Ben Simon and rode out to see Squire Howard. He found the Squire at home, and together they took a walk, and rested for a few minutes, sitting on the fence which surrounded the Squire's field of wheat. Then and there Joseph told the Squire that he had come to ask the hand of his daughter Laura in marriage.

The Squire looked up suddenly, then sprang to the ground, and, grasping a few heads of wheat in his hand, exclaimed: "I—wish I may be dashed, if I don't believe this wheat has got the rust!"

Adair got leisurely down from the fence, and, after examining a few stalks and heads of wheat, said: "No, Squire, I think not. But, Squire," he went on, "I suppose you understood the request I made, and if you do not say *No*, I will at least understand that you will raise no objections!"

But the only reply he got from the Squire was:

"Dash it! but I would hate, awful bad, to lose—to lose my crop of wheat!"

When Adair returned to the house and told Laura and her mother of the answer he had received from the Squire, the mother laughed heartily and said: "I knew it! I told you so!" And Laura smiled and blushed. Then Ada came in to know what the laughing was about, and, when she had learned, she declared that her father was not the proper person to have asked; that she was the one he, Mr. Adair, should have come to, as she was more deeply interested and immediately concerned than any one else. Then Mr. Adair made her a neat little speech; and he was very humble, and promised to be a good boy, etc. And Judge Ada, at first grave and dignified, slowly relaxed, and then relented, and, finally, joining two hands together, said, "Bless you, my children!"

And in a few more weeks there was another wedding. And Duncan and his wife, and Brantley and his wife, and Colonel Lovell and his wife, and the widow Adair and the boy Dan, and ever so many more people were present. And when Joseph Adair and Laura Howard stood before the Rev. Richard Freeman to be made man and wife, Horace Benton and Ada Howard stood upon the one side, and William Howard (Laura's eldest unmarried brother) and Mira Gilroy upon the other. And there was a silence that was almost breathless as the pale young minister spoke the momentous words that legalized and made public a union that bound together in holy matrimony two loving hearts, as true, the one to the other, as the needle to the pole. And "Well done! well done!" was the unuttered exclamation upon the lips of all. And never

did a wedded pair receive more earnest and sincere congratulations. The length and breadth and depth of Joseph's and Laura's happiness we would not attempt to measure.

And when Joseph Adair took his bride home with him, his sister and her three little daughters lived in a neat little cottage close by; and the two—the sister and wife—were soon as loving sisters.

Joseph Adair before his marriage had resigned his office of Deputy Sheriff; and, aided by a loan made him by his friend George Duncan, had begun merchandizing; and by his strict attention to business, uprightness, and unassuming kindness and liberality, prospered, as he richly deserved to do.

. . . . . .

And time passed by, years came and went, and when the boy Dan, now almost a man, left Cumberland College, he went at once into his brother Joseph's store; and Joseph used often to say that Dan was the best salesman, and talked less in effecting a sale, than any one he ever knew. "The fact is," so Joseph said, "Dan can in a few words come nearer making you believe that white is black, or black is white, than any one of his capacity I ever knew; never, however, intending to deceive you, but simply because he believes what he says." The fact is, Dan's was a cool, bold, intuitive mind, without possessing any brilliant or sparkling qualities. But Dan had one drawback, at least so his brother Joseph used to say, and that was in being "too fond of the girls." One illustration of this must suffice.

On one occasion, Joseph Adair had to send a considerable sum of money to a party living near Nashville,

Tennessee, and he told Dan, who was then about twenty and clerking for him, that he must go and take the money. Dan was ready and willing. So Joseph furnished him with a fine horse, and told Dan that on his return he must call and see Mr. Morris and family, in Robinson County, but to be sure and be back in Salem by a certain day, for there was to be a regimental muster, and he would then be greatly needed. Dan got safely to the end of his journey, paid over the money, and, returning, called to see the Morrises, whom he had never seen before. All were alive whom Joseph had known, and welcomed Dan most heartily. There were two unmarried daughters, Mary and Ellen Morris, and they called Dan "Cousin Dan"; and they told him that wild strawberries grew in the old, uncultivated fields and other sunny spots, that they were just ripe; and that he, Cousin Dan, must go with them and gather some; and Cousin Dan consented, and he liked it—liked the strawberries, and his new and beautiful cousins, particularly Cousin Ellen, the younger of the two, who was indeed a beauty, combining the charming qualities of the honeysuckle and the strawberry. And Dan went again and kept going until he had "fooled away" so many days that he feared he could n't get back to Salem by the time his brother Joseph had told him he "must be" there; but he determined to *try*, and so he "tore" himself away from his "new strawberry cousins," and did n't he go it! And Dan did n't then know much about "horse-flesh," and he "over-did it," and when a mile or two from Salem his horse "laid down and died"; but Dan was home in time. Such, in substance, was the tale he told, in his serious way, to "some of the boys"; but

it was several months before he told "brother Joseph" how many days he "fooled away" gathering wild strawberries with Mary and Ellen Morris, and of his "fast time" on the return trip.

"And when I did tell brother Joseph," Dan said, "he gave me a downright good scolding for riding his fine horse to death; and I expected he 'd charge me about fifty dollars for him—and he was worth that, —but he did n't."

When Daniel Adair was one and twenty years old he was admitted by his brother Joseph as a partner in the "store" and "tobacco factory," the business being carried on under the firm name of Adair Brothers, Daniel having the active control, for Joseph had a large farm a short distance from town to which he removed, and where he built a new house, close to his own, for his sister and her three daughters.

The slaves on Joseph Adair's farm—some twelve to fifteen in number—were generally under the immediate superintendence of Mingo. Viney's eyes, from the heat and glare of the log fires when cooking, had become somewhat inflamed; and Mingo proposed to his "Mahs Jo" to hire Viney himself; and his "Mahs Jo" let him have her very cheap. And so Mingo, with occasional aid from his fellow-slaves, erected, hermit-like, his cabin some half a mile from the other farm-houses; where he had his patch of ground to cultivate—mainly in tobacco, in which he worked of moonlight nights and Saturday afternoons, and occasionally on Sundays. But Mingo's pride was his long, heavy, silver-mounted rifle; and many of his Sundays were passed alone in the forest, and the crack of his almost unerring rifle was known to nearly every neighbor.

Many were the squirrels, rabbits, wild pigeons, ducks, turkeys, and deer that he brought to his cabin ; and liberal as he was in his presents of game to " Missus Laura," he would never take any pay excepting in the way of return presents of coffee, tea, and sugar to Viney. And Viney ! she had her garden and a great many chickens, and there was scarcely a day when she did not walk over to see " Miss Laura an' th' chil-uns'."

The first child of Joseph and Laura Adair, a son, died in infancy, but there was now another son with black eyes, and a baby daughter with eyes of blue ; and as time passed on other sons and daughters were born to them.

And just before Joseph Adair left Salem, and moved out to his farm, his aged father made him another visit and remained with him several months, and often dandled his little black-eyed grandson upon his knees. And the old man once told his " Joseph son " that Laura, " in her words and works " often reminded him of the gentle little Quakeress—Mary Harcourt, his first wife, and Joseph's mother. And Joseph, although he could scarce be said to have ever seen his mother, considered that no higher compliment could have been paid his wife.

When the aged father, Tom Adair, returned home, his son Dan accompained him ; and a few weeks later, while his youngest son was yet with him, the old veteran laid down his arms ; he had " fought his last fight," and quietly and peacefully passed away.

Just before the old man died, he requested his sorrowing children, who stood around his bedside, to take the little cot upon which he lay from the room out into the

open air, where he could look upon the heavens as he passed away. The day was bright and warm, and the old man was borne and placed in the shade of a large tree which stood in his yard. And as the evening came on, the western sky was filled with great cumulus clouds of many hues, their edges burnished with silver and gold, and around their highest peaks was like unto drifted snow, firm and pure enough for angel's feet to tread upon. And then there came a rift in the clouds just as the glorious golden sun was tipping the horizon; and the old man looked upon the gorgeous scene, and smiled as the sun of *his* life went down. He slept well.

And Daniel Adair, when scarcely more than one and twenty, married a delicate maiden of seventeen summers—one we have not known in these pages. Her hair was of that peculiar shade of light auburn which looked to have been spun from silver rather than from gold; she had large hazel eyes, a voice like low, soft, sweet music, and her face was very pleasant to look upon. But a few days after she became a mother, a

> ". . . wind came out of the cloud by night
> Chilling and killing"

the fair young wife.

After a year or two had passed away, Daniel Adair, who had sincerely mourned the loss of his fair young wife, found another beautiful, kind, and gentle one to take her place both in his heart and in his home—none other than Joseph Adair's little favorite, in years gone by, Carrie Gilroy. And in after years Dan's and Carrie's pleasant home was nearly filled with little ones—sons and daughters, and the motherless child was

among them. Judge Gilroy's elder daughters were married some years before Carrie, and both to young lawyers who afterwards rose to eminence in their profession.

George Duncan remained in Salem but a few years after his marriage, and moved to another town, not far away, where he was for many years a prosperous merchant. He too, in time, had his "quiver full of arrows," and among them was a son named Joseph Adair, and a daughter named Laura.

Poor Benton! His engagement to Miss Ritchie was soon broken off. She declined to make any explanations as to her relations with Walter Gowan; and, before her return home, it was reported that she was engaged to a wealthy young gentleman, who lived in the town where she had remained so long on a visit. The report proved to be so far true that it was only a few months after her return home before a young man came and took her back with him as his bride. But in a year or two the husband and wife came back on a visit, so it was said, to Mr. and Mrs. Ritchie; but they remained a long time, and the husband was often in town and as often tipsy. And matters grew worse and worse; and then there came a petition to the Legislature for a divorce—for divorce was not then, as now, left to the decision of courts. The petition was granted; and the husband left and went,—no one in Salem ever knew where. To the divorced wife's subsequent career we would not refer further than to say that it was a most unhappy one.

But Horace Benton himself? Oh, he was greatly distressed for a time, but he finally got over it, and married a young lady with wavy black hair and lus-

trous brown eyes ; and in after years it was said that Benton was so much in love with his home—his wife and children, that he could never be induced to run for the Legislature or for Congress ; but there were others who said it was because he was "so confoundedly lazy." Certain it is his "constitutional laziness," as he himself termed it, prevented his ever attaining the eminence he might, with his varied and brilliant talents, so easily have attained.

Jefferson Brantley remained a sportsman to the end of his days. His life was indeed an eventful one—a roving, restless, adventurous life, rich and poor by turns. Yet there ever remained much that was good in him ; he was proud and fond of his wife ; he never let her see him touch a card ; he never invited a gambler to his house, or introduced one to his wife or children ; and his children—sons and daughters—were educated at the most expensive schools in the country. When at the head of one of the largest gambling saloons, in a large Southern city, he would permit no boys, nor young men whom he knew to be poor, to gamble at his tables. And he was liberal, yea, even generous to the poor, particularly to those he had known about "old Salem."

When Mr. Brantley's eldest son was nearly grown, the father chanced to meet upon the street an "old Salem" boy who was intimate with his son, and after a few kindly words said : "You know my son well. Have you ever seen or known of his playing cards ?"

"No, sir ; I never have," answered the boy emphatically.

"I am glad—very glad to hear you say so," said Mr. Brantley ; then, after a short pause, and looking

the boy full in the face, as if to impress a lesson on his mind, he added : " Much as I love my son, I would rather see him—laid—in—his grave than know that he would ever become—a *gambler.*"

" Then, why is it, Mr. Brantley," the boy asked, " that you do not quit playing ? "

" Ah, my dear boy," he answered with much earnestness, " if I knew of any other way to make a living for my family, and educate my children, I *would* do so, but I am now—too—old, and know—nothing—else."

A few years later, Mr. Brantley, who was ever regarded as a peaceable man, considering the life he led, was killed in defending the honor of a friend—one whom he had known in Salem as a boy. He was a gambler, but he was a brave, kind-hearted man, and a true friend.

Squire Howard and his good wife lived to a good old age, and left an unblemished record. Their numerous sons and daughters were all valued and respected members of society. Dan Adair, who knew the old Squire well for many years, said of him, long after the Squire's death :

" What ! old Squire Kit Howard ? Yes, I knew him well ; and there was less *selfishness* in *his* nature than in any man's *I* ever knew. Why, I 'll tell you what he once did. He sold his crop of tobacco to Dick Gilroy, the old Judge's youngest son, and Dick shipped it to New Orleans ; and prices went down so that season that Dick lost money on the Squire's crop. And, would you believe it, the old Squire and Dick came near having a quarrel about it : the Squire insisted on standing the loss, because, as he said, Dick had proposed to pay him too much for the tobacco ; and

Dick swore like a trooper that he would n't stand it, and that the Squire must receive the full amount he, Dick, had proposed to pay. At another time, some "movers" were passing the Squire's house, and, one of their wagons happening to break down, the man asked the Squire to buy the broken wagon and the yoke of oxen that had been pulling it,—said it would be a great accommodation to him, and offered the wagon and oxen for twenty-five dollars. It so happened that the Squire had some money by him—which was n't often the case—and he bought the wagon and oxen. After a while another man came along who wanted a yoke of oxen and a wagon, and offered the Squire forty dollars for the ones he had bought from the "movers." And, would you believe it, the old Squire said: 'You can have them, sir, for twenty-five dollars; I don't need them, and that 's all they cost me. And that," Dan added, "was the way the old Squire was about everything; and, of course, he was poor; but he always seemed to have as much as he needed or wanted, and was never in debt."

And sprightly, joyous, merry Ada Howard! Yes, she got her Harry—Harry Gilroy, the eldest son of the old Judge, a large, fine-looking, and enterprising young merchant whom she had long loved; and who, in after life, was very indulgent to his delicate wife. She had no children, and for many years before she died was a great sufferer, but bore her afflictions with much patience and entire resignation. She was ever warm-hearted, and a kind, good friend to the poor and afflicted. When her last summons came she was ready and prepared; yea, seemed even rejoiced to exchange a life of suffering for one forever free from pain. Years

have elapsed since she passed away, but her memory is still fondly cherished by many surviving relatives and friends.

The widow Adair, after her three daughters were grown and two of them married (her youngest daughter was engaged to be married, but died a few days before the ceremony was to have been performed), was well cared for. For some years she sat by her chimney corner in winter, and by her open door in summer, and knit, knit, knit, until, her fingers and eyes failing, the little oil there was in her lamp of life was consumed, and almost without a flicker the dim light went out.

The widow Kent and her son remained on the old farm for a few years after the death of the old soldier and pioneer Elijah Wright, and until the old log cabin was about to tumble down. The boy, Elijah Kane Kent, paid his debt to Joseph Adair in a year or two ; and, by the time he was grown, the honest, resolute fellow owned a larger and better farm ; and in the best room of his comfortable house there hung in a frame the obligation he had, when a boy, given to Joseph Adair.

Silas Holman lived on as he had done, in Salem, for several years,—only he became more and more of a recluse,—until after the death of his sister and the marriage of his daughter, when he moved away and went to the far West, to find, so it was said, a better hunting ground.

Warren Davidson was married a few months after his last interview with Miss Laura Howard, related by us. He was fortunate in getting a wife who was very domestic in her habits, and she was known among her

neighbors as a "managing woman." For a year or two after his marriage, Davidson remained pretty closely at home, and, from money received from his wife, paid off his entire indebtedness, including the note he had given to Henry Rudolph, which was transferred to Jefferson Brantley. But then, year by year, he became more intemperate. To make matters worse, he had a passion for the turf, and for some years owned several "racers," which generally turned out "losers." Hence his fortune slowly melted away. It would have done so much faster but his wife, who had no children, attended personally not only to the management of the household but of all farming work. Davidson was, however, at all times, when not beastly drunk, a kind and hospitable man, and usually treated his wife with the utmost deference and respect. When lolling about his house, if he saw his wife approaching—returning from the supervision of some farm work,—he would occasionally summon one or more small negroes and make them spread a roll of home-spun carpet from the yard gate to the porch of his house, for his wife to walk upon; and, 't is said, she never, on such occasions, failed to reward him with a smile. Mrs. Davidson reared two poor orphan children—a brother and sister —who were to her as a son and a daughter, and who, after the death of Mr. Davidson, and when the widow was old, infirm, and poor, provided well for all her wants.

Although he was only a horse, we would tell about the last days of Ben Simon; and, strange as the little story may seem, we can vouch for its truth. When he was too old and stiff for a saddle-horse he was occasionally used to do light work about the farm. On a Satur-

day afternoon in summer one of Mr. Adair's negro men rode the old horse to a mill, a mile distant, for a bag of fresh corn-meal ; and on returning, about dusk, put Ben Simon in the stable and fed him. The stable door was supposed to have been left unfastened, for just after daylight on Sunday, Ben Simon was seen to walk through the stable lot to the gate, which was fastened by a wooden pin inserted in an auger hole bored in the post against which the gate swung. The horse pulled out the pin with his teeth, which he was never known to have done before ; and, opening the gate, walked out into the road and across to the broad stiles of hewn logs which led over the fence that surrounded the yard in which stood Mr. Adair's residence. Over the stiles the old horse deliberately walked—a feat which few horses could have been made to perform, and proceeded directly to the platform in front of the main entrance of the house, where he began pawing as if to awaken the inmates. Mr. Adair, who had just risen and dressed himself, looked out of his window to learn the cause of the knocking, and was greatly surprised to see Ben Simon. He went out at once and soon discovered that the noble old animal was suffering from botts. Every known remedy was resorted to, but without avail, and about three o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Adair walked into town to see a friend who was ill, leaving Ben Simon stretched out upon the grass in the yard and, as he thought, dying. About an hour later, Mr. Adair was seated with several friends on a platform in front of a store in Salem, and had just told them about his old horse,—how he had apparently come from the stable to the house for relief, etc., when, to his astonishment, and that of all present, Ben Simon was

seen coming up the street towards them. Mr. Adair at once arose and walked to the edge of the platform, and in a few moments the intelligent animal was by his side ; and after receiving a few pats from his master's hand, and rubbing his head once or twice against his master's shoulder, old Ben Simon turned slowly around and fell dead. It was ascertained that after Mr. Adair left home the horse arose and again walked over the stiles into the road ; and, with his nose nearly to the ground, as if tracking his master, walked off towards town. It did look, so every one said, as if the old horse had gone to town to see his master and die at his feet. Instinct or reason ! which was it ?

The year 1837 was long memorable as the year of the great financial panic. Through that fearful panic, which strewed the entire country with financial wrecks, the firm of Adair Brothers, although doing an extended business for country merchants, met all their engagements promptly. At one time they were so very hard pressed that Joseph Adair, who could make almost no collections, nor sell any of his lands, thought he would be forced to sell one or more of his negroes in order to meet a debt of eight hundred dollars due by the firm. But the money required was loaned them by none other than Joseph Adair's slave, Mingo, who took the note of the firm, payable six months after date and bearing eight per cent. interest. And, more than that ! Mingo intimated that he could let the firm have a little more money if required. When the note matured, Mingo was paid in silver coin fresh from the mint at New Orleans. In after years, Mingo was known to have some two or three thousand dollars, and perhaps more. Although abundantly able to have purchased his own

freedom, and that of his wife, he never manifested any desire to do so, and he remained until his death the slave of Joseph Adair. His death, at a good old age, was quite sudden and unexpected, and what became of his money,—where it was secreted, or buried,—Viney, his wife, who survived him several years, never knew nor did any one else. His sudden death doubtless prevented his disclosing the secret.

In the year 1842 the county of Livingston was divided, and out of the eastern half the present county of Crittenden was formed ; and, as Salem was left on the borders of the old county, the county-seat was removed to Smithland. With the Courts went all the county officials and lawyers. And as the little town ceased to be the centre of the county's trade, first one and then another of nearly all whom we have known in these pages moved away. Three years ago (1880) there were left in "old Salem"—as it was then, and is now almost invariably called—only two or three of the houses that were there as late as 1842, but among them was the old Brick Hotel. The population of the town, which at one time numbered perhaps three hundred, does not now exceed fifty to sixty ; and good farming lands, are, we are told, as cheap, if not cheaper than they were forty or fifty years ago. But a change for the better is slowly but surely creeping over those picturesque hills and valleys, for the famous blue grass, that most succulent and nutritious of all grasses, has found there a soil and climate as congenial as that of Central Kentucky ; and the old farms, exhausted by long-continued cultivation in tobacco, corn, etc., are being converted into pasture lands for the raising of fine horses, cattle, hogs, and sheep. Besides that, the

surrounding country is rich in minerals and metals we have every reason to believe.[1]

But sadder than the disappearances of familiar houses, and the decrease in the population of old Salem, is the fact that should any one who lived there forty years ago now revisit the almost deserted village, not only would he see no familiar faces, but he would hear no familiar surnames. What a restless, changing people we are in these United States of America! So few of us have homes where our fathers lived. Many of us may oft have repeated the familiar line:

"How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood!"

but to how few of us are such scenes made doubly dear by those same scenes having also been dear to our father and our father's fathers!

[1] The text was written in 1883; since then great changes have taken place in and around old Salem. The old Brick Hotel was burned down some years ago, but many new residences, some stores, and a handsome "Union" Church have been built; and the white population of the town is now as much, if not more, than ever before. Lands in the neighborhood have largely increased in value, now worth three or four times as much as in 1880; and what is known as the "Salem Valley" is one of the most prosperous agricultural districts in the State. In fact, Livingston County, in proportion to population, is now, we are assured, one of the largest exporting counties in the State of cattle and hogs. The great mineral resources of the county remain undeveloped, and lands are still relatively cheaper than in almost any portion of the West, considering the remarkable facilities for cheap transportation of produce by the three great rivers,—the Ohio, the Tennessee, and the Cumberland.

W. C. W.

SMITHLAND, Ky., October, 1896.

After the death of James Wilson, the gang around Cave-in-Rock were soon dispersed. One, who was perhaps as conversant as any outsider could be with the personnel and history of the gang, assured us that out of fifteen men, whom he had good reason to believe were members, nine met a violent death, three were sent to the penitentiary, but the fate of the remaining three was unknown to him. Verily, in this case, the "way of the transgressor was hard." On the other hand, it was but a few years before the Big Spring Meeting-house was, and we are assured is until this day, the centre of as quiet, law-abiding and religious a community as can be found in the West. Colonel Lovell's expectation that from such seed (the building of the Meeting-house and School-house) he "expected a good crop" was fully realized.

Andrew Lovell, the "quiet little colonel," lived to a good old age, and died at peace with God and all mankind, leaving behind him a widow and seven or eight children. One of the youngest sons bore the name of Joseph Adair. Good old "Aunt Harriet," as nearly every one called the widow of Colonel Lovell, lived to a very advanced age, but was, in the midst of many trials and afflictions, sustained and comforted by an unwavering faith in a glorious immortality.

A few weeks after Walter Gowan was incarcerated in the jail at Salem he made his escape. By some it was believed that Ben Bolton, the blacksmith, who was at that time the County Jailer, was bribed and connived at the prisoner's escape; but this charge was never openly brought against him. In fact, "Burly Ben" was generally liked, and considered, as one of his old friends expressed it, "about as honest as he could

afford to be, considerin' his eleven white-headed sparks." Nor was there much regret ever expressed at the escape of Walter Gowan, for, notwithstanding the awful crime which he committed, it gradually came to be regarded as the act of a crazy man. Years afterwards a report, apparently well authenticated, reached Salem that, soon after Walter Gowan escaped from prison, he, under an assumed name, enlisted in the United States army, and was afterwards killed in battle.

The farm-house of the Gowans, after the suicide of Hinton Gowan, was never again occupied; and, as predicted by Silas Holman, was by many regarded as a haunted house, and shunned. It consequently soon fell into decay; and 't was said that on one dark night, when the winds were howling and shrieking through "fields and forests bare," some flat-boat men, whose "broadhorn" was lashed to the river bank near by, heard some unearthly voices in the old house, followed by shrieks as of one in mortal agony, and that the next morning the stones and timbers of the "haunted house" were strewn in every direction, so that in a few years the original location of the building could hardly be identified.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Joseph Adair Revisits Hillsboro, N. C.—His Last Letter to his Brother Daniel—Closing Incidents of his Life—Laura Howard Adair, as Wife, Mother, and Widow—The Author's Ardent Hope.

JOSEPH ADAIR was ever known as an honorable man,—one whose word was as good as his bond. There were those who thought him close-fisted, but he was only so in that, being himself unassuming and unostentatious, he disliked anything like parade or extravagance. But there was no more public-spirited citizen in his county,—no one who worked harder or subscribed more liberally to promote improvements or advance the general good. And few men, in proportion to their ability, ever did more to aid young men who were beginning their business career. His home was the seat of a plain, old-fashioned, but generous hospitality. As a husband he was just what might have been expected from such a grave, thoughtful, and considerate man—one of such deep, pure, and fixed purposes and sentiments. As a father he was exacting of his sons:—that is, he required them to work, but he fully recognized the fact that there was "a time for all things," and when the time came to play he liked

to witness his sons at their sports. Towards his daughters he was ever remarkably indulgent. It is enough to say that few men ever had around them a large family of sons and daughters who more cheerfully obeyed, honored, and loved them than Joseph Adair. Towards the close of his long life he encountered many misfortunes, and some sore afflictions. His misfortunes, which were in no wise due to any want of prudence or foresight on his own part, he bore with manly fortitude and Christian resignation. At the close of the civil war, when his slaves were all emancipated, it seemed to be somewhat of a relief to him ; for he had been for many years an emancipationist, and had often been heard to say that his slaves had never been a source of revenue to him.

Joseph Adair's most serious afflictions were the death, first, of a witty, lively, cheerful, loving, black-eyed daughter—her father's pet—just as she was blooming into womanhood. Later on came the death upon the battlefield of a son who gallantly fought in the ranks of "the boys in gray," and who, young as he was—for he was only two and twenty when he fell,—had already made his mark in literary work, and gave promise of rising to eminence, because of his extraordinary industry and devotion to his literary pursuits. At the mention of the names of these lost children, the feeble old man, who could never shed a tear, would tremble like one who has the palsy, and hence their names were rarely mentioned in his presence, and he himself never spoke of them.

Joseph Adair ever had a reverential esteem for things sacred, and many years before his death became a church member ; but he was never a sectarian, and had

the broadest charity, not only for those who professed the name of Christ, but for those who were afar off, or in total darkness.

Near the close of his life the old man determined to gratify his longing desire to revisit the scenes of his childhood, and the graves of loved ones. A letter which he wrote from Hillsboro, to his brother Daniel—the last he ever wrote him—will more correctly portray the mind and heart of the old man than any words of our own could do. We should premise that Daniel had shortly before sustained great financial losses; from which, however, he subsequently in a great measure recovered. We should further state that Thomas Adair, Joseph's elder brother, had been dead for many years, and his widow and children had all left Hillsboro; hence, in revisiting the home of his childhood, Joseph Adair did not expect to see a familiar face, to hear a familiar voice, nor renew an earthly tie. The letter was as follows:

"HILLSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA,
"July 6, 1867.

"BROTHER DANIEL:

"When I left home I requested my daughter B—— to write you and let you know where I was going, so you could write me, and I am now looking for a letter from you. I had a pleasant trip, and have been quite well since I left home. This is a quiet, pleasant town, and the best shaded place I have ever seen. The society (I think) very good: population say 1500.

"I am anxious to learn more about the condition of your business, etc. It looks hard for a man to work hard for forty or fifty years, and then, in his old age,

to lose all, or nearly all by a few turns of the wheel of Fortune; but I hope and trust you will still have plenty to be above want, or dependence on the favors of those who may now be rich through your generosity.

"For my part I am trying to school myself to be contented with whatever condition Providence may have in store for me: and yet I think it right to use reasonable industry and economy, but not to place our whole soul on the things of this world; for this is not our abiding place—in a short time the places that now know us will know us no more forever: and we should be earnestly engaged (daily) in seeking a home where there is no *change*, no *sorrow*, no *death*.

"I hope on my return home to visit you. I feel quite sure this is my last travel from home for any great distance.

"I have for years past had a deep and ardent desire to visit the place of my birth, and see the same hills, same spring branches and creeks, over which I rambled and through which I waded and paddled when I was but a child and had no *cares*. This desire is now in part gratified, and will soon (I hope) be fully so. In a few days I expect to visit the graves of my ancestors, and take one long—long, lasting look at them.

"Give my love to your wife and kiss the babies for me.

"Your brother,

"JOSEPH ADAIR."

After returning home to Kentucky, the old man said that as he walked back, alone, to Hillsboro, from his visit to the graves of his ancestors, he suddenly became quite giddy and almost blind; and, reeling to one side

of the road, sat down, thinking that his last hour had perhaps come. "But," he added, "I was rather pleased than otherwise at the thought of dying there, and being buried near my mother."

A year or two later the good old man, surrounded by many loved ones and sustained by his devoted wife, passed gently away to his long home, and was buried close beside his darling daughter and his brave boy.

And Laura Howard, the affectionate, considerate, and unselfish daughter and sister, was for over forty years the faithful, loving, and helpful wife of Joseph Adair. During all those years she nobly bore her part in the heat and burden of life's duties, and met her disappointments, trials, and afflictions with the calmness, fortitude, and resignation emanating from her Christian life and character. But the years that have elapsed since her husband died have indeed been years of chastening and full of sorrow. Two more of her sons, in the very prime of life and usefulness, have been taken from her; and her remaining children are now scattered far and wide, necessitating long and tiresone journeys to visit them and see her numerous grandchildren. And, sad to say, not one of all her children remains at or near the old homestead, to which she feels constrained to make a pilgrimage as often as she can. These visits fill the mind of the aged and white-haired widow with floods of mournful memories, but thither her tottering footsteps will tend; for to her the one sacred spot on earth's wide expanse is that where repose the remains of her husband, two of her children, and other loved ones.

. . . . . .

And now our tale is ended! We may and we fear

we have told it very imperfectly, but the telling of it has been a pleasant task, for it has enabled us to while away many an hour that would, because of bodily infirmities, otherwise have hung heavily. In conclusion, and before regretfully laying down our pen, we would express our ardent hope that the broad lesson of charity and unselfish devotion to duty, displayed in the lives of some of the characters we have attempted to portray, will, as seed sown in good ground, bring forth an abundant harvest to the glory of God our Father.

THE END.